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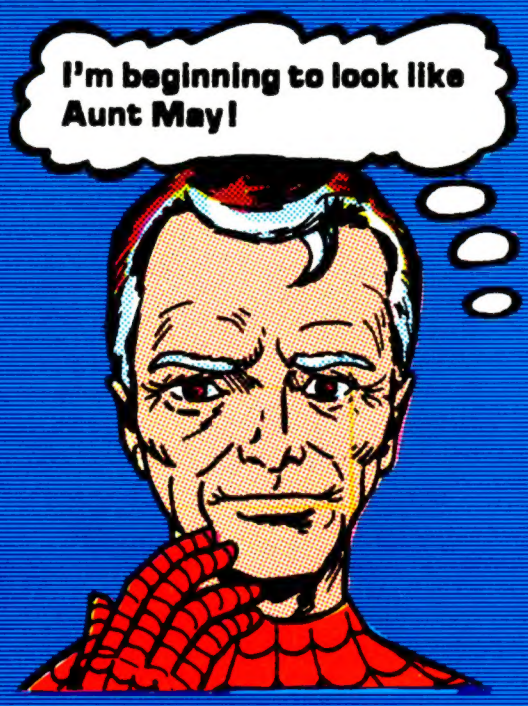

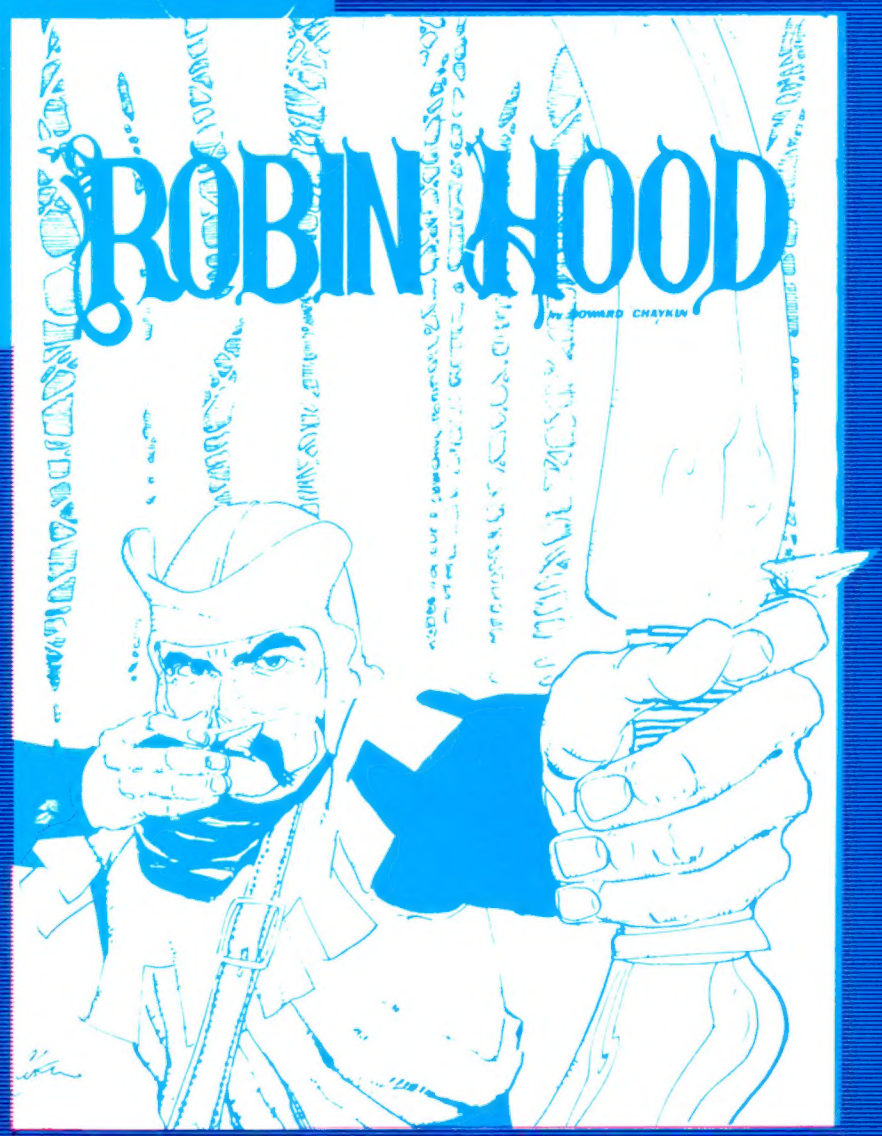

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No. 10 December

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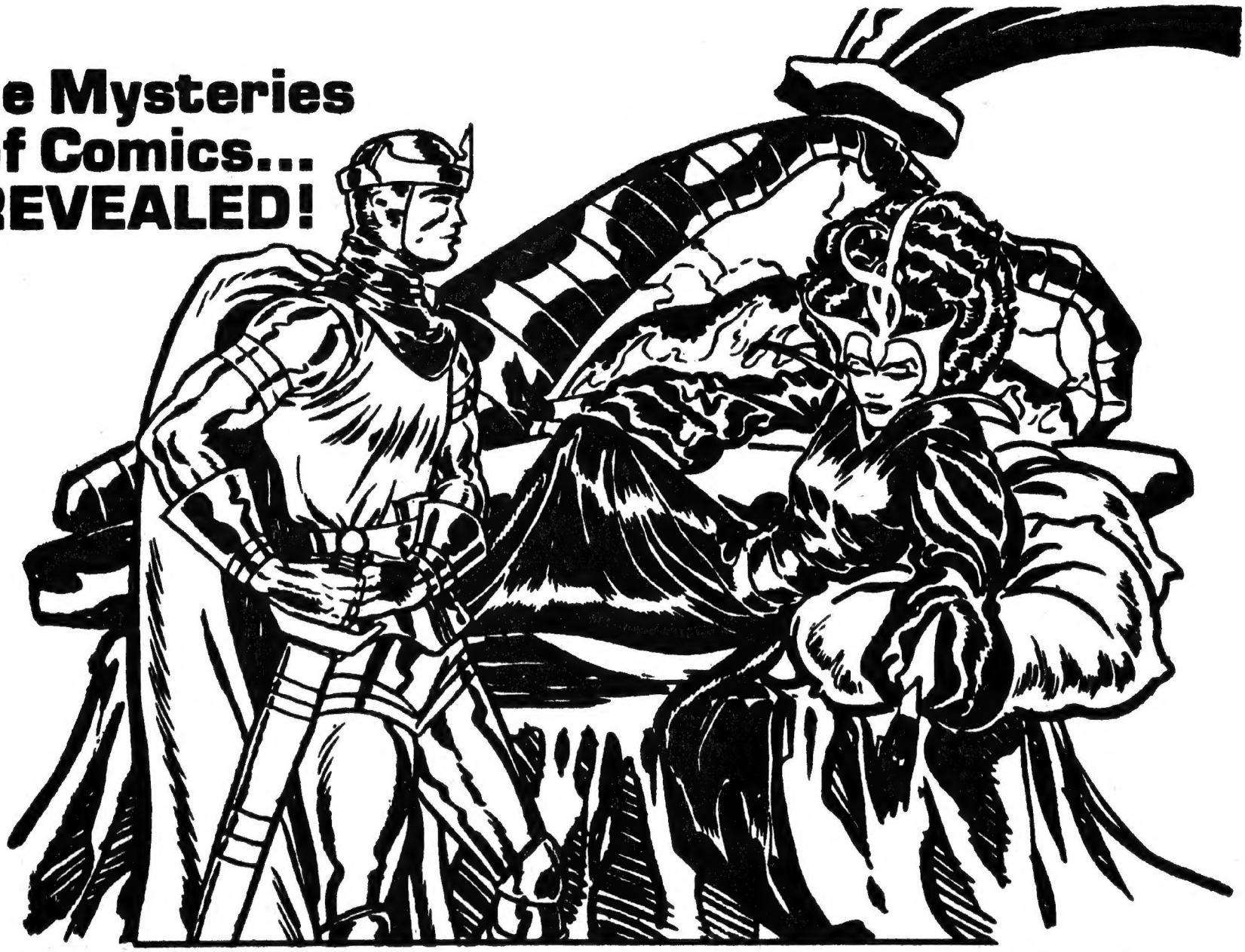

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--OF MASS MAYHEM IN THE NAME OF GOD--
SILVER SCREEN
--AND OF JUSTICE, IN THE FORM OF--
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HOLLYWOODS

The Howard Chaykin Interview

By Richard Howell

CFF: Okay, what I'd like to talk about mainly is the way you approach your work as an artist.
CHAYKIN: Okay.
CFF: What first attracted you to comic art?
CHAYKIN: I was aware of comics as something I really like a lot and wanted to do when I was about four or five. My cousin gave me thousands of comics that his mother had forced him to throw away, and I liked the bright pictures, they seemed very accessible, I didn't think of it in those terms in those days, but that's the way it is. And I always as a kid, carried it in the back of my mind the idea of doing comics for a living. And when it came time to make decisions, that's where I went.
CFF: Okay, there were many different types of comics at that point, it wasn't just super-hero, or adventure...?
CHAYKIN: Actually, for me it was the **Durango Kid.**
CFF: [Laughs] Oh.
CHAYKIN: Western comics, like **Hopalong Cassidy** stuff, **Superman**, just the regular mainstream stuff, very much.
CFF: Okay, and, how did you get started in the industry, that's a big jump deciding you'd like to do it, and actually getting in there.
CHAYKIN: Well, I worked for Gil Kane as a go-fer, as sort of office assistant, I worked for Wallace Wood a penciler, and I worked for Neal Adams. Basically, that gave me a sense of what I needed to become a professional.
CFF: That was all before any work appeared under your name?
CHAYKIN: Oh, sure. And, I ended up, finally doing some work for Dorothy Wolfolk, when she was editing the romance line of DC comics, and then I worked for Murray Boltinoff on the mystery books, and eventually got the "Fafhrd and Grey Mouser" strip.
CFF: That was your first...
CHAYKIN: That was my first major strip.
CFF: First book you had to yourself. Did you have any actual scholastic, or however, one refers...
CHAYKIN: Art training?
CFF: Art training.
CHAYKIN: No. None at all.
CFF: Would you think it would be necessary?
CHAYKIN: I probably, had I gone to an art school, might very well not be doing comics now. I might have got into things earlier, for instance, I might have gone through what I'm going through now, which is just this interest in shifting, earlier...that's it.
CFF: Leonard Starr told me that he thought that if he went to art school, he wouldn't have had to spend fifteen to twenty years learning basics.
CHAYKIN: Sure. Oh, yeah. But, on the other hand, there's many people who feel that art school teaches you to be neat and that's it.
CFF: And there's no real encouragement toward creativity? Experimentation?
CHAYKIN: Well, for example, the only person I know, there are very few people in the business, with a scholastic, academic art background. Walter Simonson, Al Milgrom, I think Jeff Jones.
CFF: That's it?
CHAYKIN: As far as I can recall, that's about it. In our age group, and, that about covers it. So you can see where that's coming from.
CFF: Talking with them, do they have any opinions on whether their academic backgrounds are a hindrance or a help?
CHAYKIN: Knowing Walter best, I'd say, the chances are there's a lot of things...The things that make up the recognizable style in his stuff are fairly academic. And I think for him, it was a very positive thing. I have no real regrets, I'm curious how changes might have effected, but I don't think about it very much.
CFF: What sort of encouragement did you have? That you think may have helped you get into the industry, to the point...was your family behind you?
CHAYKIN: No, I was discouraged every inch of the way. It was something I wanted to do, but I wasn't particularly encouraged to go into it. It didn't seem like the right way for me to make a living, to them. That's okay.
CFF: At the time you started, your style was a little far-out for what the main-stream comics were.
CHAYKIN: I don't know, I thought I was fairly mundane, by comparison.
CFF: By comparison to now.
CHAYKIN: Well, even to then, I thought I was doing fairly banal stuff, without really getting crazy, I thought I was doing very straight-forward stuff.
CFF: That would have been Fafhrd:..
CHAYKIN: Yeah, I thought that was very straight.
CFF: Well, do you see yourself as an artist, or a storyteller, or a fantasist, or any combination?
CHAYKIN: I consider myself an illustrator.
CFF: An illustrator.
CHAYKIN: Yeah. Because I'm doing what the job an illustrator is supposed to do. It's to illuminate and make

UNFORTUNATELY BUSINESS, MR. FORTUNE. I--ER--I WANT YOU TO KIDNAP MY HUSBAND FOR ME!
RATHER DRASTIC WAY TO LAND YOURSELF A MAN, ISN'T IT?
MR. FORTUNE, PLEASE--THIS IS NO JOKING MATTER!
--AND I NEED YOUR HELP TO COLLECT IT!
MY HUSBAND OWES ME MORE THAN $250,000--

clearer as story, and comics, the way to do that is to use continuity, and to use several pictures to achieve an idea. That's how I consider it.

CFF: In that light, would you say the present distinction between a storyteller and an illustrator is an entirely artificial one.

CHAYKIN: I don't know that that distinction exists. How do you mean?

CFF: Let's see, well, let's take say, Sal Buscema as an example of a storyteller.

CHAYKIN: Okay.

CFF: His pictures could not be taken as individual illustrations.

CHAYKIN: Okay.

CFF: And...oh, gosh... not Smith, because he's a good story-teller, too.

CHAYKIN: I don't think that comics necessarily should be taken panel by panel out of context. I think a comic book page should work as a unit, I don't think a panel on a comic book page should necessarily be able to exist independently.

CFF: You talked earlier about your background of taking cinema into comics, and how that has decreased in recent years.

CHAYKIN: Tremendously.

CFF: What got you started on that in the first place?

CHAYKIN: On the use of film? It seemed like a very easy way to learn the tools. It also seemed like an interesting way to tell a story, and at the time, it was. And I no longer consider it effective or viable for me. I've had this discussion a lot lately with various people, most of whom have gone through the same trip. And all of us have pretty much agreed that it's the right thing to do to get started, because it's interesting, and it's a good way to learn the trade. That's about it.

CFF: Like several of the older artists I know worked in animation before they got into comics, and they credit that as their, the reason why they're able to pick the right picture in each frame, in cases where it's argumentative whether or not that one was the right one, it still gets across what they're supposed to do.

CHAYKIN: Sure.

CFF: Who are your major influences, both in the comics industry itself and outside of it.

CHAYKIN: Right now or generally?

CFF: How about when you started, and then we'll move up to now.

CHAYKIN: There was Kane, Kubert, Infantino and Toth. They're why I'm doing comics. Right now, I'm fairly influenced by contemporary illustration. By the work of Baronstory, Bob Peek, a guy named Roy Anderson, whose work I really like a lot, a guy named David Grove,

there's a lot of contemporary guys. I like Mobieus' work a great deal. That about says it.

CFF: That accounts in large parts for your slant toward layout and page design.

CHAYKIN: I'd say that's true.

CFF: Do you feel that is adequate to tell a story in most cases?

CHAYKIN: Design? No, it has to be done well. Because as I said on the panel earlier, I think it's kind of dangerous to get into using the mannerisms solely for their own sake. The mannerisms have to be justified by a purpose, by a reason behind their use. Sort of split panels, multiple panel images, inset panels, characters stepping out of the picture, they're all tools to be used for a specific purpose. And you walk a fairly fine line between getting too clever and doing interesting graphics.

CFF: Okay, do you use any assistants?

CHAYKIN: Yes.

CFF: That's mainly to take the...

CHAYKIN: I work with many people, the guy I'm working with now is a guy named Peter Cooper, who I've known for many years, he's been with me about two years, he's got a credit on the Dominic Fortune strip, and, he functions as a second set of hands so we can produce stuff. Peter's also a bright boy. He lays in flat color, he does background renderings, does some preliminary renderings, and, it means that I can sleep, because there is a lot of work to be produced.

CFF: Yeah, and you take on a lot of work.

CHAYKIN: And I don't feel I'm losing control of the material, that's the other thing.

CFF: The finished stuff is still yours.

CHAYKIN: It's my vision, it's my hands. I'm not ashamed of that.

CFF: You feel you're in the beginning where it counts and at the end where it counts.

CHAYKIN: There are just a lot of steps in a job where it. can be handled by someone else with direction. And that means that half again as much material could be produced in as much time. And its, there's also just a lot of stuff that's boring, frankly. I'm sorry, Peter, that's the way it is.

CFF: You've used assistants on your comic book work, then, too?

CHAYKIN: Not really, I've had a couple of jobs that have been laid out for me by other people, but they were people who were working already, and they weren't kids. My assistants have been Bill Ray, Joe Jusko, Steve Oliff, a woman named Susan Duncan, who is an illustrator, and Lewis Mitchell, who is a draftsman in New York City.

CFF: Are those the comic book assistants?

CHAYKIN: No, they work with me, since **Empire. Empire, The Stars my Destination, Swords of Heaven**, that kind of stuff.

CFF: In the cases of those books, how did you go about, this is a panel question, how did you go about getting any sort of response at all to the experimentation...

CHAYKIN: Well, quite frankly, I haven't got very much response at all, because I feel they're not perceived as comics. I find myself being at conventions, and, for large spans of time, being fairly ignored because I'm not handling mainstream, contemporary superhero comic book characters. And I don't resent it, I understand it, it took me a while to accept it, but I can live with it. I don't get invited to the big out of town conventions much because I'm not doing the **Fantastic Four**, or something like that, which is what the market wants. Both Walter and I have handled these big trade paperback type stuff, both of us expected to get, like, fated, and be treated like tender princes and it never happened. Neither of us were terribly upset about it, just a little curious. That kind of thing. That's a reasonably sensible response.

IF I KNOW DOMINIC, WE'LL FIND HIM IN THE BACK ROOM--
--BUSILY LOSING THIS MONTH'S RENT MONEY.
YOU MAKE IT SOUND AS IF HE DOES IT OFTEN.
CONSTANTLY.
BUT DOESN'T HIS LANDLORD OBJECT?
I CAN'T AFFORD TO.
YOU?
UM-HMM. DOM RENTS THE "QUEEN'S" TOP DECK AS HIS LIVING QUARTERS. PUTS HIM CLOSER TO THE ACTION, I GUESS.
BESIDES--SINCE HE LOSES HIS "LONG GREEN" AT MY TABLES, I WIN EITHER WAY.
YEP. THERE HE IS. C'MON--I'LL INTRODUCE YOU.
EVENING, SABBATH. THAT'S--UH-- FOURTEEN MONTHS I OWE YOU NOW.

CFF: I would say so. Do you prefer doing the big trade paperbacks?

CHAYKIN: Oh, for sure. I find a lot of my attachments to the work have reversed. When I was younger, and I found out I couldn't do a job longer than eight pages, without getting really bored. Right now, I find it very difficult to get my energies moving until page fifteen or sixteen.

CFF: What is the difference?

CHAYKIN: For example, **Empire** was a hundred and

twenty pages. We cut it down for print, but it was originally a hundred and twenty pages. That's a lot of work. **The Stars my Destination**, volume one and two, are close to two hundred. **Swords of Heaven** is sixty-four, and the **Starbuck** books when they're both finished, will be close to ninety pages. And I'm not getting tired at all. I left my studio on Friday and I had pages 29 and 30 well under control, well rolling. And I wasn't losing any energy. I was really getting hot. There was some great stuff happening. What's wonderful is that in the old days, where I'd find myself getting bored by the middle of the job, I find myself developing new enthusiasms. Which eventually improves the quality of the book in the back. I work from front to back, I don't jump around. And what you've got is, there's something subliminal worked into that, that it's perceived by the reader as the story's getting better.

CFF: I can see that, how that can happen, yeah.

CHAYKIN: 'Cause there is a sustained level of enthusiasm. In some caes, that enthusiasm becomes greater.

CFF: So that's one of the ways you feel your approach to your work has changed over the years.

CHAYKIN: Yes, very much so. I like a big book. I enjoy working on long projects.

CFF: Is that one of the reasons you do so few actual comics these days?

CHAYKIN: Well, that, and also I don't feel it's worth the time or money. The money isn't very good, the work isn't very interesting, I'm spoiled by the trades and process, I mean, it's real hard to go back to working with what is basically cave painting. You know, when you've been playing elsewhere. It's a lot more fun working in color, I mean, the effects just become a whole lot more interesting. It's a lot more challenging, it's a lot more tougher. But it's a lot more fun.

CFF: Then you actually approach the layout pages differently...

CHAYKIN: Oh, sure. No question about it. Because I'm not having to deal with hard-edged outlines. I'm not having to deal with support of color by line. Color supports itself.

CFF: And that's where the contemporary illustration influence comes in?

CHAYKIN: Well, that, the contemporary illustration comes in because I don't like painting, particularly. I'm not all that interested in painting, as an end. One of my interests in contemporary illustration, is because you've got men using five different tools for the same piece, and that appeals to me a lot. It's just an interesting way to go. My stuff is a mix of acrylic, pentel, magic marker, ball point pen, exacto knives, colored pencil, crow quill, regular pencils, masking tape, just anything that works. Like, uh, fingerprint...

CFF: This is a process you've been building up to.

CHAYKIN: Well, it's more, you do something and you screw it up. There's something about the screw-up that works. You backtrack to the screw-up and find out why it worked, and you learn to do it on purpose. It's making accidents work.

CFF: (Laughs) Trial and error.

CHAYKIN: Sure. Accidentally mixing turpentine with acrylic.

CFF: What happens?

CHAYKIN: All sorts of interesting things!

CFF: (Laughs)

CHAYKIN: Making resists. Using a particular kind of paint on a surface that repels that kind of paint, and seeing what happens. Painting on cellophane. Just getting all sorts of different effects. And I'm trying just about anything I can get my hands on. The Starbuck book I'm working on now reflects that, and I'm having a ball.

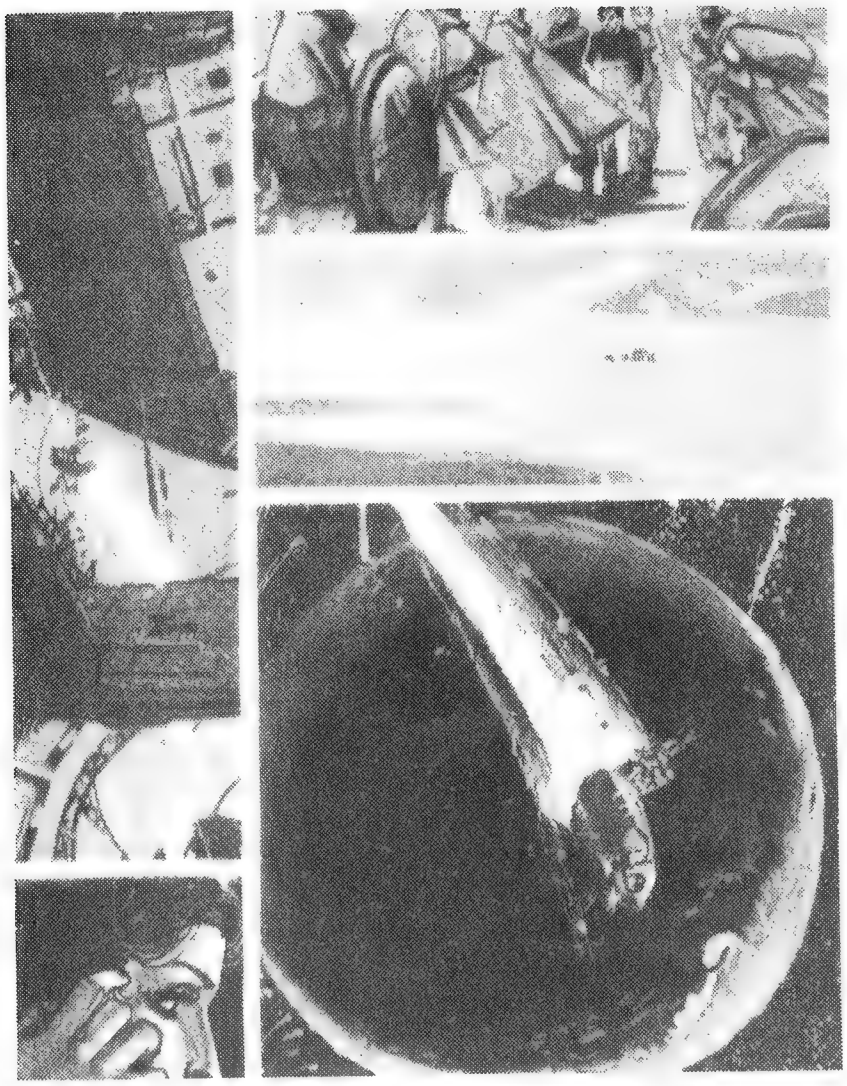
CFF: What about the Dominic Fortune series? How would you rate that?

CHAYKIN: Well, it's nowhere near the level of the stuff that I produce for myself, simply because the money I receive for it is all the money I'm gonna see on it, and the copyright of the character is owned by Marvel comics, and, my enthusiasms are very much motivated by my participating in the profits of the job. And, I thought I did a good job on the Dominic Fortune strip, but I would not expend the kind of energies that I would on some of the Starbuck material. I own the Starbuck material.

CFF: And reprint rights, and things like that?

CHAYKIN: Reprint rights in mainstream comics are sort of like a house joke. They don't even tell you what you're being paid for. Your check isn't itemized, and frankly, it's so small, it might buy you dinner. You know, so, it's kind of silly to even think about it, there isn't much there.

CFF: But you're able to get progressively better terms as you get better known as an illustrator.



CHAYKIN: Well, the terms, there are no ways to improve your terms working under the circumstances at Marvel or DC simply because they are set up on a work for hire basis, and I have no objection to working on a work for hire basis as long as I am paid phenominally well, and I'm not gonna be expected to produce work that's gonna stand the test of time. I've had discussions with people in power for a long time, who explained that they feel you're supposed to do the best possible job you can, and I do, I do the best possible job I can under the circumstances. It's the job of a publisher to exploit me, and its the job of me as an artist to avoid being exploited without hurting my employer's feelings.

CFF: Interesting philosophy. Very realistic.

CHAYKIN: Yeah! I intend to be here for a while, so...

CFF: You don't want to get burned out so soon.

CHAYKIN: Or shit where I eat.

CFF: Right. Chancing on all these different reasons why you're not doing comics any more. Mainstream comics, I should say.

CHAYKIN: Sure. You have to have that definition. I'm a comic book artist. I mean, zero. Period. That's it.

CFF: Is that as far as you're concerned, defined more in the style you've worked which actually, as far as the surface goes, varies quite a bit, from job to job, or is it, in the fact that you like, that you use your art to be telling a story.

CHAYKIN: I think it's the second more than the first. I'm constantly amazing illustrator friends of mine of the fact that in the time that it takes them to do one finished illustration, I've done twelve. And, it's just that my discipline is to produce material quickly, because that's what I'm used to in comics. Now, the Starbuck stuff, I found, as I'm getting into the book, the longer I get into it, the longer its taking me. I'm getting really into it, and I'm really getting slow. But its fun. I'm having such a good time.

CFF: Sounds like a pet project.

CHAYKIN: Oh it is. It's a beauty. Kid's having a great time.

CFF: I assume you're writing this.

CHAYKIN: Oh, for sure. As it stands now, I'd like to avoid doing anything I don't write.

CFF: Is that just because you want freedom of expression?

CHAYKIN: No, I feel I write my stuff best. There is only one project I've got that was written by someone else that I'd like to do, but even there, I'm gonna do the adaptation. It's a novel by Smuel R. Delaney called **Nova.**

CFF: Ah. Yes, I am familiar with that.

CHAYKIN: And I would very much like to do the comic book adaptation of that. And I just haven't found a publisher.

CFF: I think the Baronette situation might have something to do with it?

CHAYKIN: Uh, no. I haven't been looking very hard, I've been rather busy. (laughs) There you go.

CFF: What sort of chances are there, if you know this, for the second volume of **The Stars my Destination**?

CHAYKIN: I haven't the faintest idea. I finished the job over a year ago.

CFF: So it's out of your hands.

CHAYKIN: Yeah. I'm an employee, in that sense, and the only reason I'm asked the question is because neither Byron nor Norman Goldfine are down at this level, at a convention to talk. I mean, Byron is management, and you don't see management much.

CFF: Byron isn't that communicative to us over the phone, at least, he hasn't been to us, so far. Maybe he doesn't know much more about it than anybody else.

CHAYKIN: No, he's learned to keep his mouth shut, I guess.

CFF: You're up to a certain level of artistic exploration, which I'm sure everyone will agree, is a good deal higher than where you started out in comics.

CHAYKIN: With luck I'd have to be, it's been ten years!

CFF: What sort of new vistas, as far as that goes, do you see for yourself? Do you have goals?

CHAYKIN: Not really. I'm playing it by ear. I'm very happy with what I'm doing now, and frankly, I hope I hate my stuff that I'm doing now as much in five years as I hate what I did five years ago. Because it feels great to grow. All I want to do is improve my drawing, get better at that, and improve my rendering. Just keep improving what I'm doing.

CFF: And that's all done just as it's...

CHAYKIN: Osmotically.

CFF: More practice...

CHAYKIN: The more you do it, the better you get.

CFF: Do you think being part of a studio helped, is it more direct?

CHAYKIN: Only in the sense that I, there are people over my shoulders almost constantly. I don't think I was

all that much influenced by Jim and Bell, however, I do believe I had a fairly profound influence on what they were doing. Jim and Bell, don't worry. I kind of believe that, and Walter is going to be getting into the process of other stuff. And I'm kind of hoping that, I'm kind of curious to see what he's gonna be doing. Real interested.

CFF: So as far as that goes, the studio is no more of a place to interchange ideas for your work as...

CHAYKIN: Well, it is in the sense that I'll throw something out and somebody will say "hey, that stinks". For example, this new one-page feature that I've sold to **HEAVY METAL**, is going to be a colaboration between me and Walter. And it comes out of just that sort of bullshit session.

CFF: Is it an artistic colaboration?

CHAYKIN: Yes. You can't say pencil-ink, it's gonna be more than that. We're gonna throw things together in interesting ways.

CFF: The two of you are writing it, also?

CHAYKIN: Yeah.

CFF: Now, you have said at the panel that one of the reasons that you're not all that interested in drawing mainstream comics is that the superhero form does not interest you at this point in your life.

CHAYKIN: Not much.

CFF: Uh, what sort does?

CHAYKIN: Well, in mainstream comics?

CFF: In just about anything.

CHAYKIN: I enjoy doing science fiction a lot because it's an opportunity to build stuff. I would like to do some historical stuff. **The Swords of Heaven** has been sold in Italy, along with Starbuck, to an Italian publisher, who was totally unaware of my existance. People in Europe, I'm assuming the publication of this material will make me a little more of an aware figure over there. All young guys over here, they're all amazed to discover we're not fifty. Because all the guys over there are fairly old, when they see we're young punks...it's kind of...but they've offered me King Arthur and his Knights. And I don't think I'm gonna do it, but it's something I'd like to do. The only reason I don't think I'll do it is I don't think I could control it as much as I'd want. Because when you're working for a European publisher, there's a language problem, it just comes to flags. But I'd love to do some historical stuff. Really straight, in color, I'd love to do **The Once and Future King**. That sort of stuff. I'm also playing with the idea of a sword and sorcery strip taking place in renaissance Florence.

CFF: That would seem tailor-made for the design. Do you choose the books you want to do on setting? It seems when you're mentioning these different books, it seems it will be set in this time period or...

CHAYKIN: No, for example, when they asked me to do the Dominic Fortune strip in color for the **Hulk** book, I suggested the possibility of updating it to the fifties.

CFF: And?

CHAYKIN: They said I was nuts! They wanted to do it in the thirties. I felt like drawing jelly-mold cars. And doing a really fifties paranoia strip with the cold war. And getting into beatniks, sick humor, doing Lenny Bruce stories and they just didn't see it at all.

CFF: Obviously wasn't the reason they chose the strip.

CHAYKIN: No. Well, I know why they wanted to do the strip again, it's because Lynne Graeme really liked it, and thought it would be fun to do.

CFF: Okay, I gues that's a reason. Maybe one of the reasons they were surprised to know you weren't any older than you were in Italy was that you have a recurring fascination with the thirties.

CHAYKIN: I think it's more that the stuff we produce, well, that's possible, as I think about it. That is possible. It hadn't occured to me.

CFF: If they met Alex Toth, they probably wouldn't be surprised at all.

CHAYKIN: True enough.

CFF: Speaking of Alex, actually, would you consider doing something along the lines of his historical work? He managed to turn out quite a number of say, movie adaptations of swashbuckler movies, and he did the Zorros...

CHAYKIN: Again, not in the mainstream. I am spoiled. I use that phrase a lot, and it's true. Completely turned off on my end to mainstream as a viable form for me. I just don't like it, it doesn't interest me...

CFF: Does that extend to even doing more work in black and white...?

CHAYKIN: Yeah.

CFF: Quite a lot of disenchantment.

CHAYKIN: It doesn't interest me. It just isn't nearly as effective for me.

CFF: What tools are you using now, regularly? We went through a short list before...

CHAYKIN: Animator's Paints, acrylics, color pencil, colored inks, magic marker, pentel, india ink, graphite pencil, chart tape, masking tape, razor blades, exactos, anything that makes messes, that can be directed

CFF: Okay...

CHAYKIN: No boogers, we're working away from those.

CFF: That's about all the questions I have on technique. How would you describe your own technique, if you said it's just experimental...

CHAYKIN: Well, no. Although it sounds anarchic, it's very procedural. It's from layout, I lay out my stuff very small, I put it into a tracing machine and blow it up large. I pencil very loose, I ink and pencil and ink at the same time. I tend to do very loose pencils and tighten them up with a pencil and ink in pieces. Once it's inked, my assistant erases it, and give him four markers and tell him to lay flat color over everything.

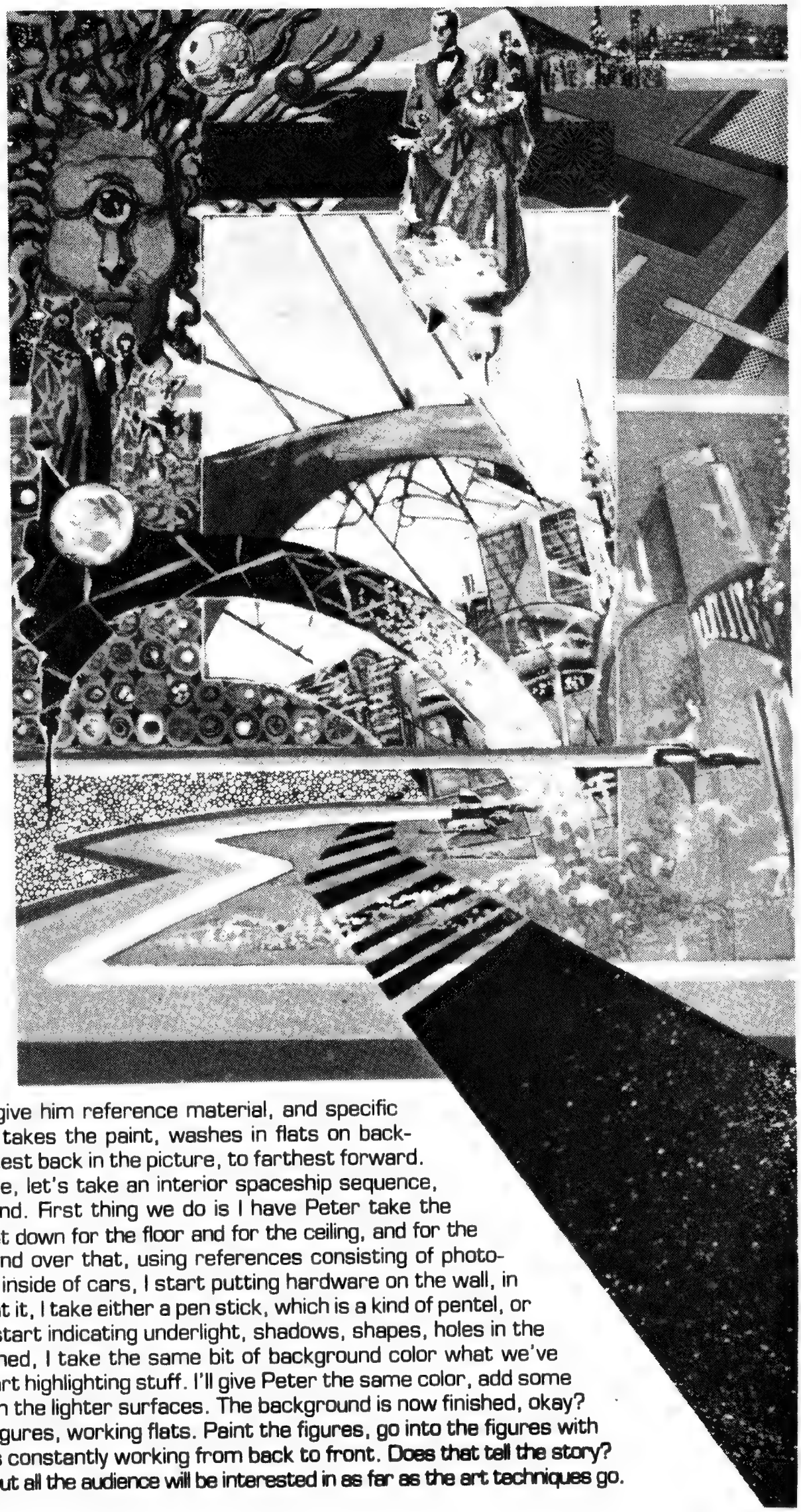
CFF: Just four?

CHAYKIN: Just four arbitrary colors. For no particular reason. They're usually blues and browns. Just so you're not working on a white surface. Just to put color down flat.

CFF: So it's you who sets the color schemes.

CHAYKIN: These aren't even color schemes.

CFF: They're not?



CHAYKIN: These are just so you're not working on a white surface. From that point, I then give him reference material, and specific color instructions. And color. He takes the paint, washes in flats on backgrounds. It's all worked from farthest back in the picture, to farthest forward. For example, as a specific example, let's take an interior spaceship sequence, for a character talking, background. First thing we do is I have Peter take the color for the background, put a flat down for the floor and for the ceiling, and for the wall. And take it back from him and over that, using references consisting of photographs of dissected engine parts, inside of cars, I start putting hardware on the wall, in pencil. Once I've got it where I want it, I take either a pen stick, which is a kind of pentel, or a magic marker, or a brush, and start indicating underlight, shadows, shapes, holes in the wall, texture shapes. That's finished, I take the same bit of background color what we've used for the wall and floor, and start highlighting stuff. I'll give Peter the same color, add some white or yellow to it, and he'll put in the lighter surfaces. The background is now finished, okay? I then take it and start doing the figures, working flats. Paint the figures, go into the figures with line, full shapes out in some places constantly working from back to front. Does that tell the story?

CFF: Pretty much. I think that's about all the audience will be interested in as far as the art techniques go.

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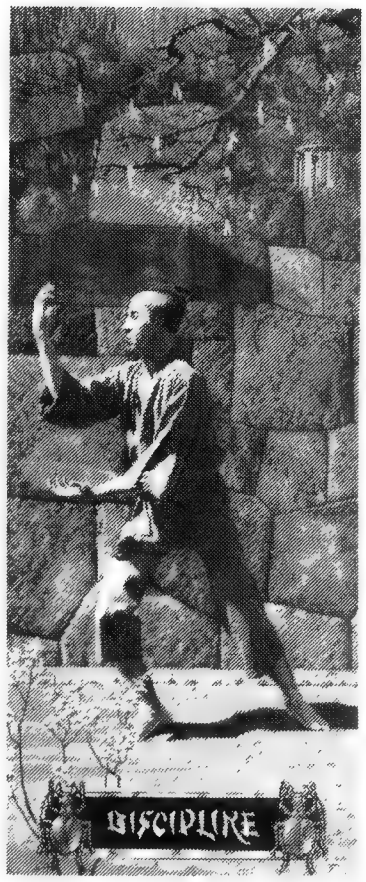

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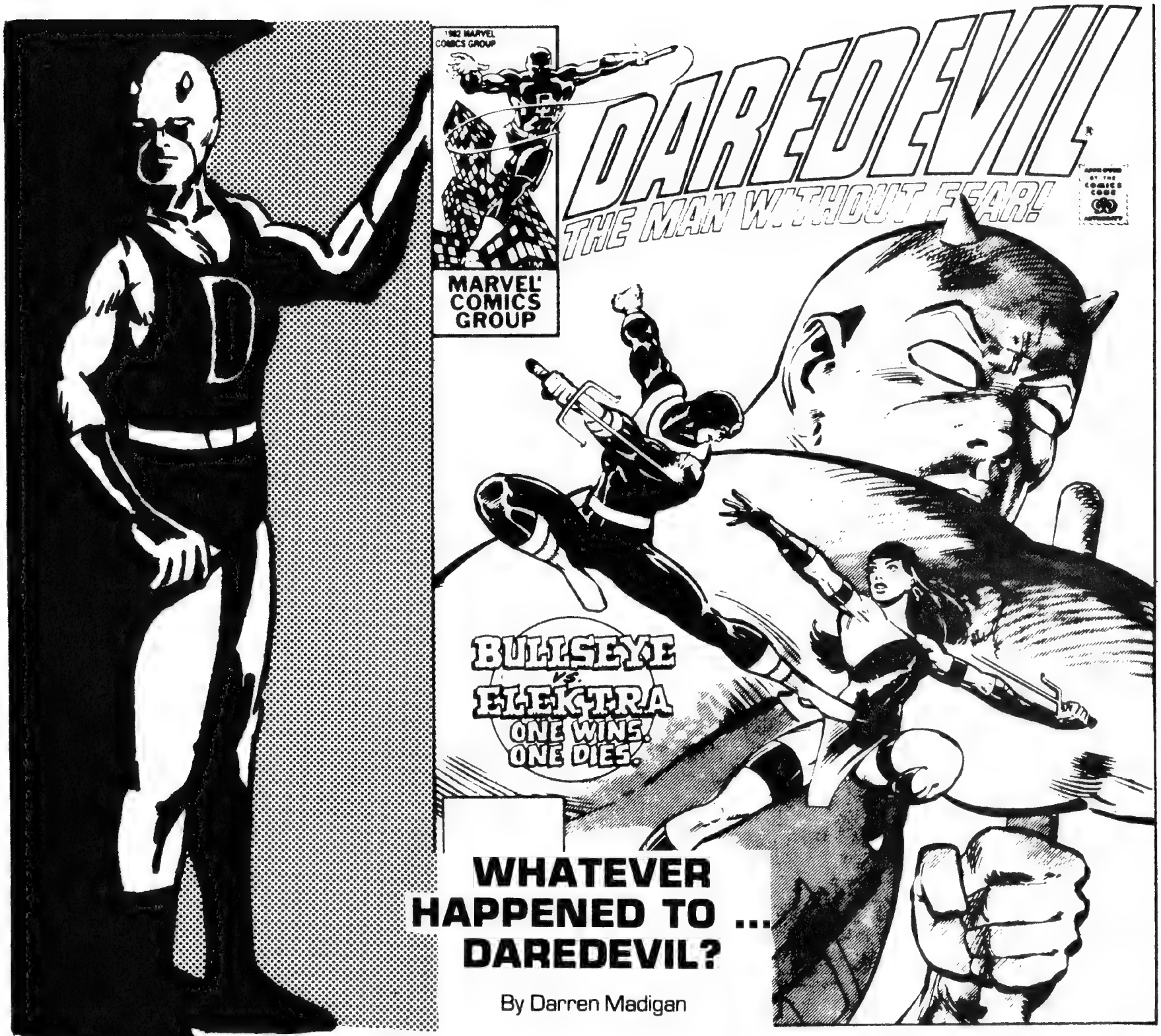

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO ... DAREDEVIL?

By Darren Madigan

There are those who would say that the current run of **Daredevil** is the finest in that magazine's history. The art, they claim, is flawless, the plots are tight and well-conceived, and the script is superb. And I'm not going to argue with them. The last twelve issues of **Daredevil** [#168 - 180] have been, from just about any critical standpoint, extraordinary comics. The art **is** flawless, the plots **are** tight and well-conceived, and the scripting **is** superb. There are those who would probably say that Frank Miller, who wrote and illustrated those last twelve issues of **Daredevil** is the best thing to happen to that magazine since Stan Lee. But they're wrong.

You see, what Frank Miller is writing isn't really **Daredevil** any more.

Just about every series ever published in comics has had, in one form or another, a concept. A concept can be defined as the certain something in a series that defines its individual identity and sets it off from all the other comic book series being published. In a series centering around one main character, such as Daredevil, Spider-Man, Superman, Captain America , Shang Chi, or any of countless thousand single characters that have been published in comics history, this idea of concept usually takes the form of both the atmosphere and the emphasis of the book. For example, in **Master of Kung Fu**, the atmosphere is pretty much one of pseudo-Oriental mysticism, and the emphasis is on martial arts and the clash between Eastern philosophy and Western materialism. **Captain America's** atmosphere is one of idealism and patriotism, and the emphasis is on the individual's responsibility and commitment to his or her own personal ideals in the face of any and all adversity. A series with no concept is usually boring and pointless. It also usually fails.

When Stan Lee created **Daredevil,** he infused the character with a feel and an ambience that was totally unique. Right from the start, the series had an original, one-of-a-kind atmosphere all its own. Though the first issue of **Daredevil** was sold on the gimmick of "The World's Only Blind Superhero" [a tagline that Dr. Midnite might have strongly objected to, were his adventures being published at the time], DD's atmosphere went far beyond that simple twist. The major idea that permeated Daredevil's first and, to a slightly lesser extent, subsequent issues was that of breaking free of an unwanted lifestyle by periodic adoption of another identity. From his introduction, Matt Murdock, who would eventually become Daredevil, was characterized as someone who was living a life that was chosen for him by outside circumstances—first the wishes of his father, and then the accident that robbed him of his sight. Because of his father, young Matt spent his entire childhood studying, when he would much rather have been outside romping around or playing on the football team. Because of his loss of vision, Matt was forced to live his life as a blind man, despite his heightened senses of hearing, touch, smell, and taste, as well as his additional "radar sense" which could easily have enabled him to live a normal life. [It has never been satisfactorily explained just why Matt felt constrained to play the part of a blind man, especially in light of the fact that, had he ever told anyone about his new abilities, it might possibly have led to a breakthrough in the treatment of blindness. One would think that physicians would be very interested in a radioactive material that causes the advent of such powers in human beings.] Thus, Matt Murdock was a textbook case of frustration. Added to this was the vow Matt had made to his father, that he would never be a fighter, that he would use his head instead of his fists. Eventually, under the impetus of bringing his father's killers to justice without breaking his vow, Matt devised what was to become his only method of release: Daredevil.

By becoming Daredevil, Matt could exhibit and use the skills that he had always had to hide before. Though apparently a deep-seated urge for physical self-expression had caused Matt to work out throughout his childhood, his physical skills had to be kept a secret, lest his father grow angry at Matt for both taking time away from his studies and for seeming to emulate his father's own lifestyle [the one thing that Matt's father dreaded was that his son would grow up to become just another second-rate boxer like him]. Now that he had to hide [for reasons unknown] his special abilities behind a facade of helpless blindness, his frustration became almost unbearable. As Daredevil, he could indulge his stunted exhibitionism. He could cut loose, and really do all the things he was capable of, since nobody expected Daredevil either to act like he was blind or like a dignified, brilliant student [and, later, attorney]. Nobody could make Daredevil study when he'd rather be out romping around, and if Daredevil caught crooks during his romp-time instead of playing football, well, that was just due to adult priorities taking precedence over kid's games. Nonetheless, being a superhero was not a responsibility to Daredevil; it was a release, a kick, a game.

I'M TRYING TO TALK TO YOU, AND ALL YOU CARE ABOUT IS EDGING CLOSER TO THAT WINDOW
LISTENING TO THE SIRENS AND WONDERING WHETHER DAREDEVIL MIGHT BE NEEDED.

Though Matt Murdock doubtless had a deep-seated feeling of responsibility for the welfare of his fellow man which caused him to swing into action when he'd probably have rather stayed home with Karen or Natasha or Heather, he also got something out of it that other superheroes didn't seem to. Given a choice between super-heroics and the woman he loved, Matt chose superheroing—not out of a deep-rooted feeling of duty, but because he knew that having gotten used to it, he could never live without it. Whenever Spider-Man decides to quit, he generally has something happen to him that makes him remember that "With great power comes great responsibility"—in other words, Spider-Man has a duty to mankind that he cannot simply shrug off.

Matt Murdock, on the other hand, is a brilliant defense attorney; if he feels he has any duty to mankind, his vocation probably more than fulfills it. Every time Matt has quit [with one exception], he has started up again because he realized that he was hooked on super-heroics. The one exception to this took place in **Daredevil #151**, when Matt, disgusted at the results of what he saw as his interference in Maxwell Glenn's life, and disillusioned with the results that this had had on his relationship with Heather Glenn, decided he'd had enough of being DD. He changed his mind when a group of terrorists hijacked a bus and he was the only one around capable of stopping them. Judging from the past, though, it seems highly likely that Matt would eventually have reassumed his Daredevil identity out of personal need, had he not had his personal responsibilities pointed out to him in this way.

Given this type of emphasis and theme, the atmosphere of the book was permeated with an aura of exhilaration and freedom rarely found elsewhere in comics. Matt Murdock loved being Daredevil; it was the high-point of his existence, the thing that made all the time he spent pretending to be helpless and crippled worthwhile. His behavior in the role showed it; while as Matt Murdock he was cool, reserved, introverted, and even shy, as Daredevil he is a blatant exhibitionist. Swinging, vaulting, flip-

ping, and bouncing across the city, shouting wisecracks at the slightest provocation, he was venting all the accumulated frustrations built up during the long days when he had to pretend to be less capable than he was. The Daredevil of this time was a joyous celebration of the idea of one man living life to its fullest possible extent, fulfilling all of his wildest desires, despite the limits and demands put on him by circumstance.

Frank Miller's **Daredevil** is nothing like this.

In the twelve issues that Frank Miller has been writing **Daredevil**, he has transformed the character from the swashbuckling, lighthearted, wisecracking adventurer he was created to be into a dark, gore-spattered, frightening, intensely violent warrior who seems to enjoy causing fear and pain as much as he used to enjoy vaulting over rooftops. One of the major reasons that fans have accepted this transformation is that it was started before Miller came onto the magazine, by his direct predecessor, Roger McKenzie. McKenzie's run [issues #151 through #167] stands out mostly for one thing—the Batmanization of Daredevil. McKenzie jettisoned both Daredevil's sense of humor and his need for releasing frustration through an assumed identity and replaced them with a driving need for vengeance on the underworld which had destroyed his father. Where the pre-McKenzie Daredevil felt no particular need for vengeance once the man who killed his father had been brought to justice, the McKenzie Daredevil was a fanatic figure of darkness, an unstoppable scourge of the underworld whose name could send shivers through the toughest crook—for criminals are a superstitious and cowardly lot, don't you know, and they don't like having a "devil" on their tails.

This Batmania culminated in issue #164, in which McKenzie represented DD's origin tale and in the process re-wrote, re-slanted, and re-structured the story so that Daredevil came off a revenge-driven maniac. McKenzie's Daredevil was also much more violent and vicious than he had been in the past, something that Frank Miller happily played up when he took over the pencilling chores in #158. Abruptly, rather than throwing punches and kicking and tripping people up with his billy club cable and occasionally whacking guns out of people's hands with his billy club proper, Daredevil began using his staff as a bludgeon, either handheld or thrown. That stick, please remember, is steel-reinforced wood, and as such is a good deal nastier than your average policeman's nightstick—and suddenly, Daredevil was hitting people in the face with it. Repeatedly. Spewing blood and teeth and bone fragments everywhere, in graphic detail. And looking as if he enjoyed it. [And if Miller enjoyed simply drawing it when he got the chance, imagine what fun he was going to have when he was writing and drawing the book.]

So by the time Miller took over the writing chores on **Daredevil**, the book had already been taken vast distances away from its original concept. Miller's changes were seen in contrast with what McKenzie had done, rather than what Lee and Thomas and Isabella and Wolfman had done within the proper concept of Daredevil. And since Miller dropped the most blatantly objectionable thing that McKenzie had introduced, that being the Batman copying, and brought back at least the rudiments of DD's sense of humor [though DD's wisecracks are a lot rarer and a lot nastier than they used to be], most people, who had by then forgotten much of what Daredevil used to be like, thought the strip was a return to better days. However, the basic atmosphere of the McKenzie issues was, if anything, reinforced throughout Miller's tenure. The brooding, dark, violent aura that McKenzie imbued **Daredevil** with was expanded on hugely once Frank Miller had his hands firmly on the reins of the book.

The very first thing Miller did was introduce the incredibly violent, twisted, and amoral Elektra as a villain and former love interest for Daredevil. Though Elektra's first appearance was basically well-done, once she came back she rapidly reshaped the whole series in her image, as Miller's obvious infatuation with the character occasionally led him to give her more room in Daredevil's title than ol' Hornhead got himself. The fact that this character has been in the limelight almost continuously, with the noticeable exception of #177, cannot help but make the general atmosphere of Miller's **Daredevil** seem to consist of mostly gore, violence, shards of splintered bone, psychoses, and various assorted nastinesses that wouldn't have even been allowed to eat in the kitchen in the pre-McKenzie days.

I--I WANTED HIM TO DIE, NICK. I DETEST WHAT HE DOES... WHAT HE IS.
BUT I'M NOT GOD-- I'M NOT THE LAW--
--AND I'M NOT A MURDERER.
EASY, SON!
NO! LET ME GO! I WANT TO SEE MY SISTER, MARY! THEY TOLD ME AT SCHOOL SHE--
© 1981 Marvel Comics Group
BILLY...
... SHE OD'ED ON ANGEL DUST. THE DOCTOR DID EVERYTHING HE COULD, BUT...
...SHE... SHE'S DEAD. I'M SORRY...
NO! IT AIN'T FAIR! IT JUST AIN'T FAIR!

Miller also did his own re-telling of some of DD's origin. In this one, he introduced Stick, an underworld pool hustler who not only was blind, but who also just happened to have taught Matt how to get along. By using this device, Miller tied Daredevil in even more firmly with the underworld, reinforcing yet again the dark, brooding air the book has. He also completely rewrote a major part of DD's origin, since Matt had his hypersenses from the day of the accident [or, at least, very soon thereafter] and never professed a need for a tutor before. However, Miller probably felt that if Roger McKenzie could re-write Daredevil to justify his own peculiar vision of the character, then he [Miller] could do the same thing.

Another major change Miller made in the magazine's atmosphere and emphasis was in the antagonists the Daredevil went up against. Where the pre-Miller Daredevil was known for gimmicky super-villains with flashy powers who were often almost as laughable as they were deadly [and some, like the Leap-Frog and the Matador, were far more ludicrous than they were menacing], Miller's DD fought far more vicious and twisted foes. Compare, for example, the likes of the old Stilt-man, the Man-Bull, the Owl, the Jester, both Torpedoes, and Starr Saxxon with Elektra, the Kingpin, Bullseye, Michael Reese [a psychotic Gladiator look-alike], the Ninjas of the Hand, and the Damned [those repulsive members of a degenerate underground society]. Whereas the first group are all bizarre, gimmicky characters, playing off their own individual effect and motif, the second group is made up of a bunch of psychopathic, disturbed degenerates. Most of Frank Miller's villains seem to be designed to send a chill up the spine of the average reader by playing on the average reader's healthy fear of the dangerously insane. While some of Daredevil's former foes may have been ridiculous in concept, Stan Lee and Roy Thomas both demonstrated that a villain did not necessarily have to be disturbed to be ominous or frightening. Both the Owl and the Jester, despite silly names and somewhat stupid abilities, managed to project a certain feeling of danger and menace. [On the other hand, it must be admitted that nothing on God's Earth is ever going to make the Leap-Frog or the Matador seem particularly threatening.] Frank Miller relies on only one method for making his villains memorable; he makes them psychotic. All of the villains that he has created for Daredevil have been certifiable maniacs, and both Bullseye and the Kingpin [one of whom had formerly been a fairly standard professional assassin with a gimmick, the other a fairly standard crime-lord type with a gimmick] were given new, disturbed personalities. The common denominator of all of Daredevil's antagonists under Miller is a fairly simple one: they are all scum. Some of them are good at it [Bullseye, the Kingpin, Elektra, the Ninjas] and some of them are totally incompetent [Turk and Grotto, Frank Miller's interminable fall guys], but all just exude corruption and rot and vileness. And if **Daredevil** is populated with characters who exude corruption, be it competent or bungled, then the entire atmosphere is going to be tinged with the same corrosive elements.

The change in the villain-type is symbolic and symptomatic of the entire change that has come over **Daredevil** over the past three years or so. Where the book was once lighthearted, fun, good-natured adventure, it is now a heavy, dark, disturbing treatise on the terrible things locked up in the hidden corners of man's mind. And there is nothing wrong with heavy, dark, disturbing, psychological thrillers. In fact, Frank Miller has demonstrated that not only can he write and illustrate them very well, but that the fans want him to. The problem is that he is using Daredevil as the medium for these types of stories, and Daredevil is just not the type of character for it. Frank Miller's Daredevil is an interesting character. Unfortunately, the **real** Daredevil is even more so. It is a dreadful shame that he isn't being published anymore.

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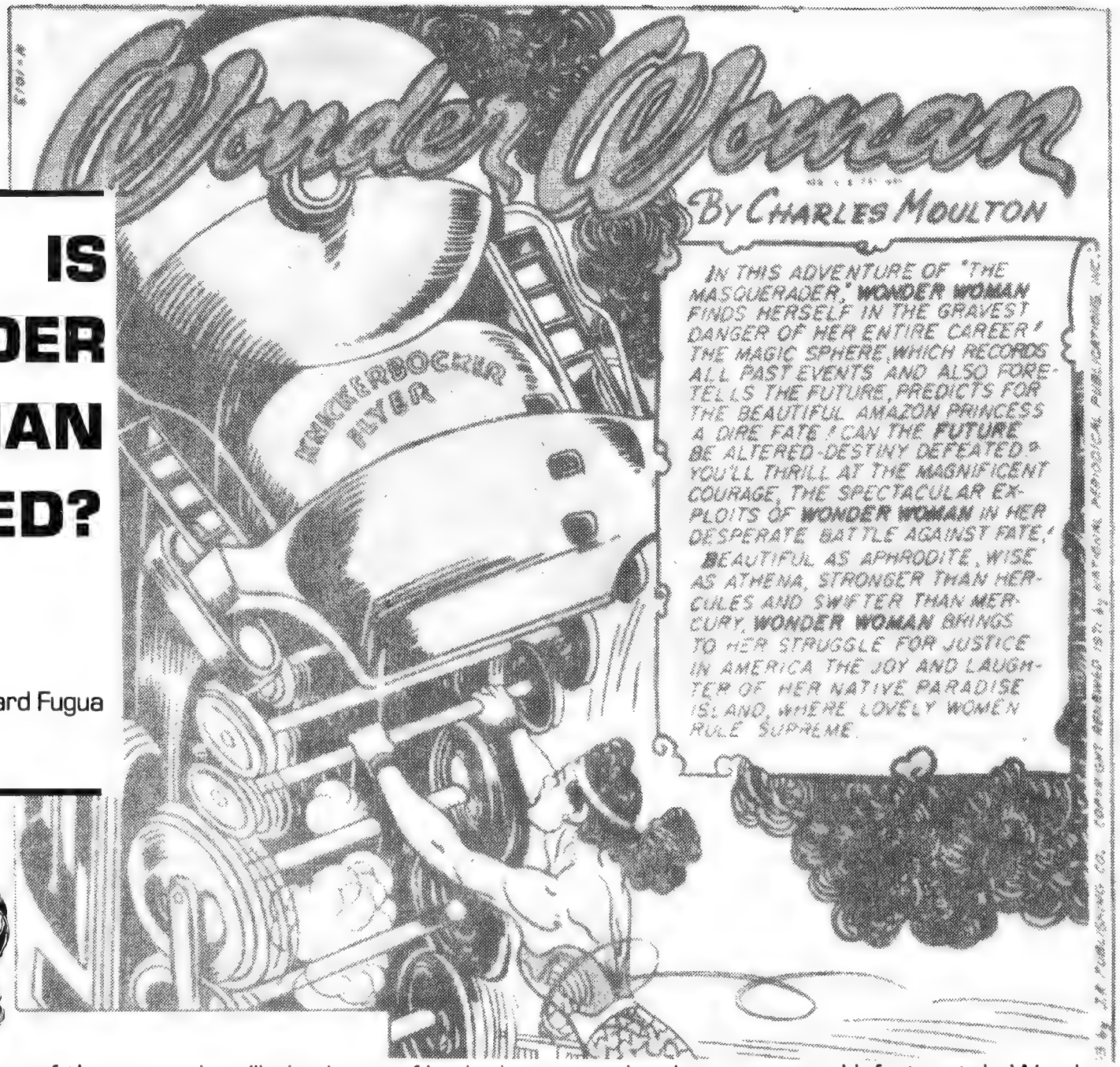
IS WONDER WOMAN RUINED?

by Edward Fugua


Wonder Woman
By Charles Moulton
IN THIS ADVENTURE OF "THE MASQUERADER," WONDER WOMAN FINDS HERSELF IN THE GRAVEST DANGER OF HER ENTIRE CAREER! THE MAGIC SPHERE, WHICH RECORDS ALL PAST EVENTS AND ALSO FORETELLS THE FUTURE, PREDICTS FOR THE BEAUTIFUL AMAZON PRINCESS A DIRE FATE! CAN THE FUTURE BE ALTERED-DESTINY DEFEATED? YOU'LL THRILL AT THE MAGNIFICENT COURAGE, THE SPECTACULAR EXPLOITS OF WONDER WOMAN IN HER DESPERATE BATTLE AGAINST FATE!
BEAUTIFUL AS APHRODITE, WISE AS ATHENA, STRONGER THAN HERCULES AND SWIFTER THAN MERCURY, WONDER WOMAN BRINGS TO HER STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE IN AMERICA THE JOY AND LAUGHTER OF HER NATIVE PARADISE ISLAND, WHERE LOVELY WOMEN RULE SUPREME.
KNICKERBOCKER FLYER

Wonder Woman is one of the cornerstones upon which the D.C. Empire is based. She is a member of the hallowed Big Three who, along with Superman and Batman, is the only character to have a virtually uninterrupted run from the Golden Age to the present. Wonder Woman is always considered the lesser of the three, a kind of kid sister carried along by the strength of the other two. Like her male counterparts Wonder Woman is more an archtype than a person, a creature born out of legend and literally out of myth. The fault then lies not with the character but with the creative talent that have handled her. Since the loss of Charles Moulton, a constant stream of writers have proven their total inability to deal with the character. At various times she has been stripped of her origin, her memory, her powers, and her costume. During humiliating bouts of brain damage and amnesia she has watched her boyfriend die and return to life only to die and return to life again. The lack of respect that writers and editors have shown her is upsetting to any fan of the woman D.C. once billed as "Super Heroine Number One." For too many years she has been a weak link in the D.C. line-up. Now, with the arrival of her three hundredth issue, it's long past time to examine what's right and what went wrong with the Wonder Woman series.

First there is basic continuity to consider. Superman and Batman have always had pretty much the same origin, one that draws heavily on their Golden Age beginnings. No matter how many times the story is told and retold Superman will always be rocketed to Earth from the exploding planet Krypton and Bruce Wayne's parents will always be shot by a mugger. Unfortunately Wonder Woman isn't this lucky. The Silver Age [Earth I] Wonder Woman begins roughly with #105 with an origin story that bears only superficial resemblance to that of the Golden Age [Earth II] Wonder Woman. There is no clear reason why Robert Kanigher tampered with the myth. Perhaps he was ignorant of the Golden Age stories, or perhaps he was uncomfortable with their sexual suggestiveness. The most likely explanation is that he simply didn't concern himself with what had come before. He decided to start fresh with a character who resembled the old Wonder Woman but really wasn't. It may well be that he had a "new" Wonder Woman in mind, one who would replace the old just as the new Flash and Green Lantern had replaced their earlier counterparts. Whatever his reasons, Kanigher failed gloriously, and some of

the confusion that he caused is still in effect.

In his version of the story (I shall assume that most readers are familiar with the other, more frequently used version) Princess Diana is born not from a statue but from Hyppolyta in a perfectly normal way. Her father is never shown, but Hyppolyta is later shown pining for her lost love, a prince named Theno. In this version, a lot of Amazons had husbands—in fact they seem to be pretty normal Greek women. Don't become too attached to the menfolk though, those incredibly unlucky, not to mention unskilled, warriors are soon wiped out in battle. The remaining women flee in boats and establish Paradise Island. All this is well and good, but the legend isn't that easy to change. There is no real impulse to force the women to leave "mans world" and establish a paradise for women only. Their bracelets are also rendered absurd since these women were never enslaved.

Kanigher also added a section to Wonder Woman's origin in which groups of gods and goddesses arrive at her birth to grant her their powers. Why they would do this is unknown since, in this version, there is nothing spectacular about her birth. Hercules even gives her his strength, even though in every other retelling he is the enemy of the Amazons.

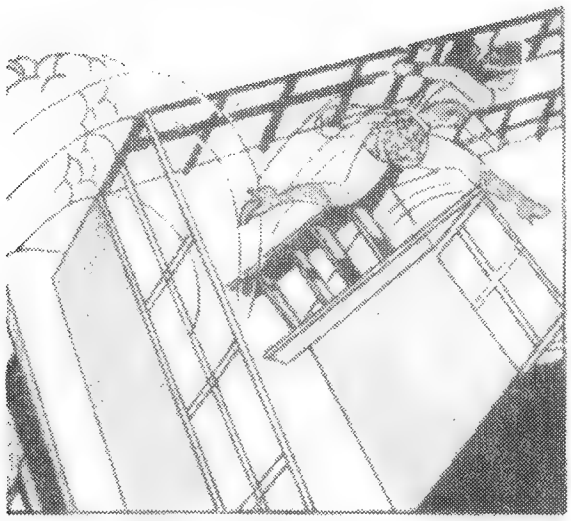
The damage this does to the story is not obvious at first. It establishes Diana as not merely the best of all Amazons, but as Super Amazon. Even as a child she is shown as having powers far beyond ordinary Amazons. Given this, the contest to take Steve Trevor back is a foregone conclusion. As a child Diana peers into the future and sees that this is what her life will be. She designs a mini Wonder Woman outfit for herself which she keeps until she grows into the teenage Wonder Girl. The Wonder Tot and Wonder Girl stories did nothing but subtract drama from the basic legend and were all too obvious an attempt to cash in on the Superbaby and Superboy stories. One can only be grateful for the editorial wisdom that spared us the adventures of Batbaby and Batboy. Unfortunately, the two younger versions of Wonder Woman grew to be so popular that they were featured with their elder version in a series of "impossible tales." These imaginary stories were the height of silliness, particularly when they used Hyppolyta, who was billed as Wonder Queen.

D.C. seemed to have little regard for their readers. Wonder Girl was popular, so she simply appeared, popping into existance in Brave and Bold #60 without a word of explanation. This Wonder Girl was identical to the earlier version, but she seemed to coexist with the adult Wonder Woman. It wasn't until years later, in Teen Titans #22, that anyone finally got around to telling her origin. This story by Marv Wolfman is consistent with the Wonder Woman series, but also draws upon the Golden Age. It marks the first Earth I use of the Amazon's famous Purple Ray.

After ignoring the Golden Age for so long, Kanigher suddenly switched gears and began to retell the 1940s stories. This was the first time Wonder Woman was plunged into her own past, and it was the first of many new beginnings that would plague the series. Without exception, the stories in this sequence are uniformly bad. Besides destroying the last shred of continuity, these watered down tales lacked any trace of the Golden Age charm. The poor storytelling is matched only by the poor art. Mercifully this artist goes uncredited, but he shows a unique lack of skill when dealing with the female form. In some panels, Wonder Woman appears to weigh around 300 lbs., with balloon like arms and fingers like sausages. With this the series struck rock bottom and the stage was set for **Wonder Woman** #179. This was the issue in which Wonder Woman would lose her powers and costume, as Paradise Island shifted into an alternate dimension.

The damage Kanigher did to this series can not be minimized. He managed to cripple it so badly that in many ways it has never recovered. Superman and Batman each have a large and varied cast of supporting characters and villains that can be called upon to provide depth and color to a story. Wonder Woman has been separated from her past life so often that she lacks these storytelling advantages. Even today, the series does not have a long term cast of characters, except for Hyppolyta and the often dead Steve Trevor.

The official editorial explanation for Wonder Woman's loss of powers was given in the letter column of #179. "The world we live in has changed," the editor explained, "and after much soul searching the Amazing Amazon has resolved to become a closer part of it." It was true that in 1968 the times were a'changin', but they were changing for all of D.C.s characters. Around this time many of the D.C. titles were given overhauls, but of the Big Three only Wonder Woman received such a drastic change. Such a decision continued the condescending attitude



that D.C. has always had for the character.

If Superman were to lose all references to Krypton, readers would be upset. If Batman were to abandon his costume and fight crime as Bruce Wayne, a lot more readers would complain. Yet the very people who wouldn't dream of tampering with those icons saw nothing wrong with stripping Wonder Woman of every single thing that made her unique. The Amazing Amazon seemed to have no vocal fans, in fact it's surprising that she had any fans left at all after Kanigher. During his tenure most of the letters printed read as if they were scrawled in crayon on the back of a post card. The real reason that Wonder Woman lost her super powers may well be that her sales had slipped so low that the publishers decided any change at all would have to be one for the better.

Denny O'Neil authored Wonder Woman's second new beginning. All of Paradise Island vanished into another dimension so that the Amazons could renew their powers. Rather than go along, Diana decides to stay behind and relinquish her costume and powers. Justifiably, many fans consider this the low point in the series. Despite several striking Jeff Jones covers and some exciting dimension hopping stories these tales never really caught on. At their best they were nothing but Modesty Blaise/ Emma Peel imitation, and only a shadow of what Wonder Woman could be.

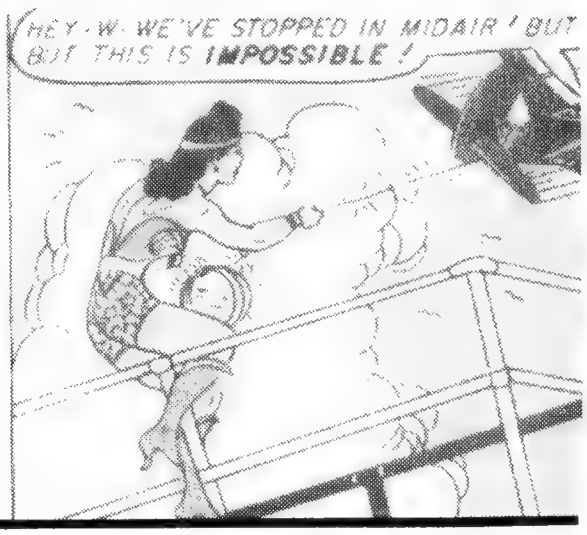
Times continued to change, and Wonder Woman continued to be out of step with them. The Amazon's colorful form graced the premier issue of **MS. Magazine** with both a cover picture and a short article. A hardcover edition of her Golden Age exploits was published, complete with a scholarly study of the Amazons and an introduction by Gloria Steinem. After so many years, Moultons dream of providing a role model for girls had finally come true. Womens Lib was in full swing and Wonder Woman had become their symbol. All this must have been an embarrassment to D.C., who, at the time, were still publishing the watered down Diana Prince stories. Clearly it was time for a third new beginning.

Wonder Woman #204 ushered in what was, if not the Amazons worst period, certainly her most humiliating. It started off on the wrong foot with a rushed story and very bad art. In fact, the story is so hurried, so clumsy, that there's something almost familiar about it. Yes, after many issues, the heavy hand of Robert Kanigher was back at the helm [if there is a Goddess in heaven this man will be punished for what he did to Wonder Woman] and he brought Don Heck with him, easily the worst of all Wonder Woman artists [that's no small honor when you consider the many artists who have failed at this series].

The story opens as Diana's Oriental sidekick is killed by a convenient sniper. A few pages later, the sniper is dead, and a wounded and amnesiac Diana somehow manages to steal an Air Force plane to fly back to Paradise Island. We lack time to properly cover all of the problems with this story, but somehow Paradise Island came back from whatever dimension it was in and no one thought to tell Diana. It hardly matters since once she becomes amnesiac, she seems to have no trouble finding it. Hyppolyta rebuilds her daughter's memory by playing tapes from the Amazon Memory Bank. This memory bank is a marvelous thing, since it also manages to restore all of Diana's lost super powers.

This is the issue where Kanigher violates his own origin of Wonder Woman in favor of the Golden Age story. Since then a variation on this Golden Age story has been pretty much a part of the cannon, but it wasn't until years later that an issue of **Secret Origins** would get around to telling the story in detail, providing the "final" word on the matter. In #204, however, two statues are brought to life by Apphrodite, our own Amazon and a black child that is stolen by Mars. This child grows up to be Nubia, a black Wonder Woman who is Diana's secret sister. Nubia may have been a violation of the real origin tale, but she seemed to possess some potential as a character. Unfortunately, she made only three appearances before vanishing into comic book limbo, and today it isn't even clear if she is a part of the established continuity. This is also the first time amnesia enters Wonder Woman's life. There is some confusion at first as to exactly what state her memory is in, but eventually it is established that her past life as Wonder Woman is restored to her with the sole exception of the time period during which she lacked powers. By that time, many fans were probably wishing that they too could forget those adventures. Most comic book heroes manage to recover their memory, Wonder Woman, however, was allowed to continue with her mind thus impaired, and that was just the start of her problems

In Nos. 207 - 211 Wonder Woman was pushed back to the Golden Age for the second time. Just as Kanigher had done years earlier, these are rewritten and redrawn old stories with only a fraction of the original charm. Whether these stories belong in Wonder Woman's continuity is questionable. At least some of them were later shown to be



induced by the Amazon memory machine.

Wonder Woman #212 ushered in yet another team of new artists and writers, and a new editor in the person of Julie Schwartz. This change marks her fourth "new beginning" and at first it looked fairly promising. The new team was able to quickly explain away the issues that had preceded them. I-Ching and Steve Trevor both turned out to be dead and the Steve that had appeared in 207 - 211 was nothing more than a "mentally induced substitute". The idea of Wonder Woman walking around with, and talking to, what was nothing more than an illusion, was enough to make any fan grit their teeth in rage. In the context of the story, Wonder Woman is at first enraged, then in tears when Hyppolyta tells her the truth. This would turn out to be the first of many times the Queen would manipulate her daughters mind, always with the best intentions, but with no regard for her free will.

For the first time in decades, the series had real continuity. Unsure of herself after the amnesia, Wonder Woman demands that she be put to twelve tests of her strength before being allowed to rejoin the Justice League. Each test would be monitored by a different Justice Leager. The twelve labors gimick should have worked, but while the constant stream of guest stars kept things interesting, the stories were marred by a creeping silliness. Martin Pasko included such tidbits as a shampoo that could transport people to another dimension and Wonder Woman strapped to an operating table that was sent careening down a mountainside. All this was still better than what had come before, but just when it looked as if the Amazing Amazon would get back on her feet, disaster struck in the form of the Wonder Woman T.V. series.

At first, the series seemed like a blessing for fans of the Amazon. After years of being ignored she was back in the public eye, and the first Lynda Carter movie was an appealing adaptation of the origin story. But like the comic, the full potential was never to be realized. A.B.C. had no more faith in the show than D.C. had in the comic. The T.V. series was never given a permanent place on the schedule, and after appearing sporadically for over a year it was sold to C.B.S. This, mind you, would be Wonder Woman's third new beginning on television alone, and this time around the show was updated to a modern day espionage setting. The price readers had to pay for all this confusion was Wonder Woman's fifth new beginning in comics and her third jaunt back to the days of W.W.II.

This time, instead of redoing Golden Age tales, the creative team came up with "new" adventures of the Earth II Wonder Woman and her battles against the Nazis. They were probably hoping to bring back the spirit of the Golden Age, but all they really did was bring back the form, the substance without the spirit. The Cheetah and Baroness Von Gunther even made token appearances. But, somehow it wasn't the same.

No one was very surprised when **Wonder Woman #243** rolled around and the storyline returned to the present. Once her continuity was re-established, writer Jack C. Harris began a series of adventures that once again showed promise. Harris had all the moves down pat and interesting subplots immediately began to appear. There was a new, more interesting Steve Trevor, a budding friendship between Wonder Woman and Hawkwoman, as well as a backup feature about Amazon history, though the latter hardly lasted long enough to be noticed. There was still something missing from the series--it seemed to lack heart, or perhaps it was just that Harris was unable to write with the conviction of a true Wonder Woman fan.

The series stumbled on for some time without any real sense of direction. Then, along came #269, and wait, can it be? Yes, "A NEW BEGINNING in the WONDER WOMAN SAGA." This was her sixth (or seventh, depending on how you count) new beginning, and while it had some good points it was also marked by some very sloppy writing. The idea of having Wonder Woman "find herself" by returning to the island of her birth was a good one. Much of the story was probably prompted by an editorial desire to bring back Steve Trevor, an impulse similiar to the one that took Robin out of college and put him and Batman back in Wayne Manor. Despite the editorial pressure, there is still no excuse for the sledgehammer style of character motivation employed in the "Renewal on Paradise Island" stories.

Before going on, this article should concern itself with the ongoing soap opera of Steve Trevor: Dead or Alive. As fans will recall, the handsome flyboy has bitten the dust twice, once gunned down by Dr. Cyber, then having his life force stolen by the Dark Commander. Each time the death was shown as being permanent and final, but the big lug just wouldn't stay down. In comics, every time a character is blithely resurrected it stretches credibility badly and takes away a great deal of drama. If a minor character like Steve can come back to life twice, then certainly readers will not worry about Wonder Woman, whose life can never really be threatened while such antics are going on. Bringing Trevor back once was a shameful use of deux-a-machina, but bringing him back twice was inexcusable.

Returning to the newest, new beginning, we find that Wonder Woman decides that man's world is just too much for her and retreats to the safety and comfort of Paradise Island. Seeing that her daughter is still grief stricken over the loss of Steve Trevor, Hyppolyta petitions Aphrodite for help. The friendly goddess agrees to grant forgetfullness and sends the Mists of Nepenthe to Wonder Woman's room. Writers who want to manipulate Wonder Woman's mind usually use Hyppolyta to do their dirty work, which is tragic since the queen is the one person who should respect her daughter's free will. Fortunately, relations between mother and daughter are still good, largely because the empty headed Amazon still has no idea what her mother did to her.

Wonder Woman's second case of amnesia would be more complete than the first, but like the earlier experience it would never be fully cured. On this occasion, Wonder Woman is stripped of her costumed self completely. Though it's never clearly stated in the text, it seems that the magic mists caused her to forget all about man's world and to believe that she's always been just plain Princess Di of Paradise Island. When Steve Trevor crashes near the island in a plane, it is as if they had never met before.

To be accurate, they really had never met before then. This Steve Trevor is not the real Steve Trevor at all, merely an otherworldly duplicate, one of an infinite number of Trevors on infinite worlds. After his arrival, it becomes clear that Diana will have to take up the red boots and star spangled hot pants again, so the goddess sends more Nepenthe mists out. This time she hits every man, woman, and child on the entire planet, and convinces them that Steve Trevor never died, and that this new original Steve Trevor is the genuine article. The mists partially restore Diana's memory. She seems to recall that she was once Wonder Woman, but not that she ever knew Steve until the day before, when he crashed in the water near Paradise Island. That last part is awfully hard to swallow. Without any memory of Steve how can she recall the things they did together, and all the times she rescued him?

Let's take this again, a little more slowly. First, in #204, Wonder Woman loses her memory completely, and regains all of it except for the time during which she had no powers. Years later, in #270, Wonder Woman forgets about every aspect of her life except for her upbringing as an Amazon. Next, she remembers being Wonder Woman, and seems to recall her whole career except for Steve Trevor's part in it. Conway is deliberately vague about the effects of the mists, and that raises annoying problems. For example, it may be that the second dose of the mists brought back memories of Wonder Woman's whole career, including the time she was without super powers. This could explain why she remembers fighting Dr. Cyber, although she probably wouldn't remember **why** she fought Cyber, since she would have no idea that it was Cyber who killed Steve.

Despite this bad beginning, Conway proved to have basically good instincts on the series. He provided some stability to the Amazon's life with a new job and a real supporting cast. General Darnell and Etta [woo woo] Candy made their Earth I debuts, both of them Golden Age characters who seemed to arrive by way of the television series. Putting Steve Trevor back in the cast was probably a good idea in the long run, but it hardly seemed worth it after the terrible Mists of Nepenthe sequence.

Before going on, a word must be said about Wonder Woman's villains. Quick, without checking your collection, name Wonder Woman's greatest super villain. It's a tough question because after forty years she really doesn't have a super villain to call her own, in the Batman-Joker or Superman-Luthor sense.

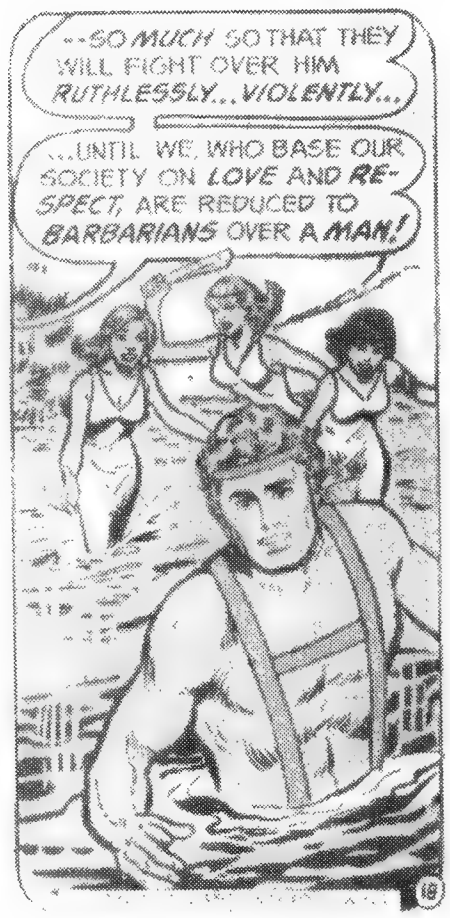
Many heroes go through lean years, but surely no comic character has ever had to face such a motly assortment of second rate crooks.

YOU MAY HAVE THE GIRDLE THAT GIVES YOU AND YOUR AMAZON SUBJECTS IMMORTALITY, HYPPOLYTE...
...BUT YOU MUST PAY A PRICE FOR ALLOWING YOURSELF TO BE DECEIVED BY A MAN!
APHRODITE'S COMMAND WAS THE GODDESS' IDEA OF A GREAT COSMIC JOKE... ANY AMAZON SEEING A MAN STANDING ON OUR ISLAND WILL INSTANTLY FALL HOPELESSLY IN LOVE WITH HIM...

There was the Paper Man [A fearsome foe whose body had all the properties of paper itself, when last seen he was trapped in a newspaper plant where he was pulped into the late edition], the Mouse Man [This tiny character wore a mouse outfit, complete with tail and Mickey Mouse-type ears. Besides having the dubious ability to speak with rodents, his only other distinguishing feature was that he was so small Wonder Woman constantly risked stepping on him in a fight and crushing him to death], and last and certainly least, the Crimson Centipede [A garnish villain who had to be seen to be believed, he had bright green skin, red antenae, and sixteen pairs of arms and legs]. These villains are so obviously described by their names that I'll let the readers guess for themselves what the Human Fireworks, Egg Fu, and Dr. Domino look like. All of these losers combined wouldn't make a single Joker, or even a Penguin.

Long time Wonder Woman fans will probably point to the Angle Man as her chief foe, and the Man with a Thousand Angles certainly gets points for persistance if little else. He is the sole holdover from the Kanigher days, but at heart he is nothing more than a glorified con man. His clever schemes may baffle the Amazon for a while, but he never has the sense of physical menace needed by a true super villain. Lately he's been given a green jumpsuit and a weapon called the Angler. As he himself describes it in Secret Society of Super Villains Special, the Angler can "shove things clear out of our dimension...twisting them at a ninety degree angle into some other world." Unfortunately, since he gained this weapon, he seems to have lost some of his cleverness and hasn't yet come up with a very interesting way to use it. Probably that's because no one can figure out what twisting an object ninety degrees from our world really means.

The other major contender seems to be Dr. Cyber. The mysterious Cyber certainly gave the non-powered Diana Prince a run for her money, but she has yet to truly prove herself against the real thing. There's some continuity problem with this, since


--SO MUCH SO THAT THEY WILL FIGHT OVER HIM RUTHLESSLY...VIOLENTLY...
...UNTIL WE, WHO BASE OUR SOCIETY ON LOVE AND RESPECT, ARE REDUCED TO BARBARIANS OVER A MAN!

Wonder Woman probably can't remember her first fight with Cyber, but the biggest stumbling block lies in the nature of Cyber's character. With her scarred face and her mixture of science and magic she comes across much like a transvestite Dr. Doom.

Recently, there has been a trend toward bringing back the Golden Age villains. This is probably a good thing, her foes were much more menacing back then, but there's that continuity problem again. When the new Cheetah makes her first appearance she inherits her costume from her aunt Priscilla Rich, the original Cheetah. When Wonder Woman meets this new Cheetah she recognises her as an old foe, and editor Len Wein has a footnote saying that they last fought in #230. All this is well and good, but the truth is that the Earth I Wonder Woman has never fought the Cheetah. That was the Earth II Wonder Woman who clashed with the Cheetah in #230, and every time before. Roy Thomas had the right idea in #289, when the Earth I Wonder Woman met the Earth I Dr. Psycho they simply met for the first time as strangers. Only time will tell if these two new villains will live up to their namesakes.

Speaking of Roy Thomas, after several uninspired Conway issues, along came #288 and a [you'd better sit down for this one] "New and Exciting Era." This time she didn't lose her memory or her powers, only the eagle on her chest, and had it replaced with two stylised W's. After seven or eight new beginnings it was hard not to be cynical, but the truth was that for the first time since Charles Moulton, Wonder Woman had a writer who was both competent and had an understanding of what made Wonder Woman work.

Like Moulton, Thomas is a student of classical mythology. The Golden Age Wonder Woman was founded in the spirit of the Greek myths and countless fairy tales, elements of her character that have been largely ignored. With his tenure on Thor, Thomas proved that he was more than capable of handling the mythology of many different races. For the first time, it became possible for D.C.'s Greek gods to become as powerful and dramatic as their Marvel counterparts. The D.C. deities have always seemed like overgrown clowns rather than awesome gods, and they always will so long as Mars is allowed to run around with a huge M on his chest.

In addition, Roy Thomas is a student of Comics history. These days it takes an expert just to tell what Wonder Woman has done and what she remembers doing. The fact that editor Len Wein seems constantly confused between the Earth I and Earth II versions indicates that the series has become far too convoluted.

In all ways, Thomas seems to be the antidote for the problems that have plagued the series for so many years. That there are problems cannot be denied, but thus far this article has only attempted to give a rundown of the basic series. By now a clear picture of the basic problems and their possible solutions should be appearing.

1] **Continuity** - In his article on the Amazon in Amazing World of D.C. Comics, Martin Pasko explains how a character can be weakened by lack of behind the scenes editorial control

SEIZING THE BIG SHIP BY ITS UNDERCARRIAGE, WONDER WOMAN LEAPS LIGHTLY TO THE GROUND.
MUSTN'T LET 'EM CRASH-BRING YOUR MAN BACK ALIVE IS OUR AMAZON PRINCIPLE!

and states, "One might call the 'behind the scenes editorial control' of Wonder Woman 'loose' one might also call King Kong 'a large monkey'." He then goes on to list the nine editors who had handled the series up to that point. Since then a number more have had their chance at Wonder Woman, and now the number of editors runs over a dozen.

It wasn't bad enough that there were so many editors, but each of them seemed to have a different plan for making the series work. They each seemed to sense that the series was floundering before they took over and gave their writers carte blanche to change whatever they wanted. Some of this could be forgiven if it weren't for the fact that not one of the editors was able to successfully carry out his plan.

Readers trying to keep up with all this probably are tempted to say, "To Hell with continuity, let's just get going with decent stories!" It sounds tempting, but this is the very attitude that has done so much damage. Instead of building on what had already been established, a number of writers did the exact opposite, by actually cutting Wonder Woman off from her past, either by physically removing her powers, or mentally removing her memories. Over a period of years this left us with a lead character that had no major villains, no supporting cast, and no real secret identity. With all this, it's no wonder the comic had such low sales. Unfortunately, low sales seemed to prompt D.C. into bringing on new editors and new changes, a vicious circle that has barely been broken even today.

It was bad enough that so many writers felt it was necessary to manipulate Wonder Woman's life, but the way in which they tampered with the legend shows a certain lack of respect, if not outright contempt for the character. Which brings us to...

2) **Characterization** - Some people, particularly feminist fans, have said that the problems with Wonder Woman stem from the male writer's inability to deal with such a powerful and dynamic female figure. Furthermore, Wonder Woman is only the oldest victim of the general ill treatment received by super-heroines at the hands of male writers.

In many ways, Marvel has been more innovative than D.C., but not in this case. If Diana were a Marvel heroine she might have suffered the fate of Phoenix [suicide] or Thundra [reduced to being a female wrestler, fortunately this Femizon was hustled off to her home time zone before the idea of mud wrestling occured to anyone] or, Goddess help us, Ms. Marvel [kidnapped and raped, she managed to give birth to her rapist and fall in love with him, finally leaving Earth so that they could live together in limbo. She was eventually allowed back into the Marvel Universe, but like Wonder Woman of years before, it cost her both her super powers and her memory]. Of Marvel's super strong heroines, the ones who can punch it out with the boys, only She Hulk and Spider Woman remain. The latter has suffered the same problem with shifting writers and constant "new beginnings" that have cursed Wonder Woman. She Hulk has lost her own comic, and like Ms. Marvel, has joined the Avengers where, one hopes, she will avoid time traveling rapists.

To be truthful, the only reason D.C. has a better track record is that they have no real super heroines to damage, outside of Wonder Woman that is. By far, most of their super heroines, like Black Canary and Zatanna, exist only as an appendage of their mates or the male dominated Justice League. Aside from that, the Vixen was shot down before she ever had a chance, Madame Xanadu vanished quickly, and Supergirl's old series was so undistinguished that many fans today are surprised to learn that she ever had her own title.

This appalling trend may or may not mean something, but it is hard to believe that the abuse placed on Wonder Woman's mind and body has been mere coincidence. Other comics can recover from a few bad years. Batman has periodic revivals, like the O'Neil-Adams issues, or the Engleheart-Rogers stories, but no one has come along to save Wonder Woman. Comic writers often talk about capturing the roots of their character, but in Wonder Woman's case they say this with tongue in cheek. During her three trips back to the Golden Age, none of the stories have captured the true spirit of the early stories. The truth is that for some time now many writers have deliberately avoided the original spirit of Wonder Woman, and it may well be that the root of all her problems lay in...

3) **The Golden Age** - In **Seduction**

of the Innocent Frederic Wertham says, "If it were possible to translate a cardboard figure like Wonder Woman into life, every normal-minded young man would know there was something wrong with her." Wertham said a lot of silly things, but in this instance he might have accidently hit the nail on the head. There was "something wrong" with the old Wonder Woman, and a lot of normal young men seemed to know it.

It would take at least another whole article to describe the Golden Age Wonder Woman, but let us show in brief that she was a strange bird indeed. Born the heir to an absolute monarchy, on an island of women, she grew up to enter a world of men, and there preach the values of democracy. Moulton's view of WWII seemed to be that it was a war started by men and fought by men to the detriment of all mankind. In his stories, all wars, and indeed all human suffering, is like this and the only answer to man's madness is woman. And it wasn't just any woman who had the answer, it was one born without sex, brought to life by the power of pure love. She comes of age in Paradise where love is not something gross and physical, but pure and of the spirit. She comes to our world never knowing the touch of man and, like Lancelot of old, hers is the strength of ten because her heart is pure.

It's clear which side Moulton takes in the battle of the sexes, and his world view is as romantic as it is simplistic. It's also difficult to refute. Men were running the world in 1942, they're still running it today, and the amount of war, cruelty, and suffering hasn't really diminished.

All this is well and good, but what the series has become most famous for is the incredible amount of bondage and sado-masochism that filled its pages. This must be taken in context, since there was a lot of bondage in the old comics. Whips and tight fitting outfits were standard fare for the parade of Nazi bitches and Dragon Ladies that slinked through countless comics. What made Wonder Woman different was the attitude it took.

Virtually every major villain and every alien society Wonder Woman visited kept slaves, complete with whips, chains, the works. The really odd part about it is that Diana never saw anything wrong in all this. Remember, the Amazons had personal experience with slavery, and their attitude seemed to be, if it feels good, do it. In **Wonder Woman #3**, she says, "If girls want to be slaves, there's no harm in that. The bad thing for them is submitting to a master or to an evil mistress like Paula [Baroness Von Gunther]. A good mistress could do wonders with them!" Whether this attitude is sick or merely years ahead of its time is up to the readers to decide. It is interesting to note that in Wonder Woman's opinion all masters are bad, but a female slave owning mistress could be good or bad.

Wonder Woman herself was a true dominatrix, she could reduce anyone in the world to a complete slave just by wrapping her magic lasso around their little finger. This was a power that she never abused. All those slaves, with their sexual connotations, were for other people, Diana herself did not indulge. She had no difficulty in keeping Steve Trevor at arms length, and when Moulton left the series she was as naive and virginal as when she first left Paradise Island. All the sex involving Wonder Woman was in the minds of the readers [shame on you]. As an Amazon, and a super heroine, Wonder Woman always regarded men in general, and Steve in particular, as the forbidden fruit she can never have.

If the series only had S & M going for it, it would have vanished quickly, but fortunately it had a lot more. It was a woman's comic in all senses of the word. The theme and philosophy of many stories contained powerful feminist messages, and women were literally everywhere, often in positions of some importance and power. In the 1940s, a new world had begun to open up for women, as the wartime economy offered positions in factories and the armed services that were once for men only. Moulton's rhetoric was many years ahead of its time, and it would be quite a while before Women's Lib caught up with him.

A glance at a few of the Golden Age tales reveals what the third major element was. The old Wonder Woman often traveled to other planets and alien dimensions. She went to the far future and the distant past. Unlike Superman, she was free to change history, saving Indians from an old west massacre or joining Boedicia in driving the Romans out of Britain. She counts as a friend Queen Desira of Venus, who flies with beautiful butterfly wings on her back. If Wonder Woman wants to travel to another planet, she can just leap on the back of her trusty sky-kanga, which can send her hurling through the vacuum with a single bound of its powerful legs.

You get the picture, we're talking heavy fantasy here. It was in this fairy tale atmosphere that Wonder Woman was born and thrived. Needless to say, this heady combination of fantasy, feminism, and kinky sex, could not be tolerated under the comics code. Along with the sexual elements the feminist philosophy was lost. Somewhere along the way, the fantasy aspects of the comic also vanished. What was

left? Not much, and writers have never really tried to bring back the spirit of the Golden Age. Perhaps they think today's fans won't tolerate the bizarre atmosphere of those stories, assuming they got past the comics code.

What evolved was the dull vapid Wonder Woman who filled the Kanigher years. Refusing to fall back on the Golden Age meant that there was no easy recovery from those bad years, and so began the cycle I've already described. The old Wonder Woman might have been a bit strange, but that was better than no personality at all. It was no wonder so many writers felt free to humiliate her and defame her character, for a long time she had no real character to defame.

What was needed all along was a writer who could sift through the Golden Age stories and cull from them the elements needed to make an exciting story and a compelling character. Roy Thomas was perfectly suited to this task, but unfortunately he seems to have left the series. The good news is that the new editor of the comic is Marv Wolfman, and it was he who was responsible for the best story ever about the Amazons and Paradise Island. Oddly enough, this story was not in a Wonder Woman comic.

Teen Titans Nos. 11 - 13 offered Wonder woman fans what they had been waiting for. There is an exciting story based on a hitherto unexplored area of Greek mythology. Paradise Island, as depicted by George Perez, is lush and beautiful, and so are the Amazons. After years of fumbling by lesser artists, Perez has finally hit upon the right design for the Amazon armor, and his form fitting silvery mail seems both exotic and functional. For the first time, the gods seem to have power on a truly cosmic scale. In fact, a feeling of epic myth permeates the entire saga. Wolfman is by no means a stranger to the legend of Wonder Woman. In one of his first stories for D.C., he introduced the famous purple ray to Earth I. The ray also plays a part in the Titans story, along with the re-introduction of the Amazon's kangas.

Hopefully, now that Wolfman is in charge of the series, good things will begin to happen. He may be the one who can make the myth work and breathe new life into the character. It's about time too, Wonder Woman's been waiting quite a while for the right man to come along.

WHEN WONDER WOMAN FIRST APPEARED (IN ALL-STAR COMICS #8; DEC., 1941 - JAN., 1942), SHE WORE THIS COSTUME, WITH CULOTTES.
SOON AFTER THIS, THE FIRST CHANGE CAME; HER CULOTTES BECAME SHORTS, THUS ANTICIPATING THE HOT PANTS STYLE.
(FROM WONDER WOMAN #7, WINTER, 1943)
A FEW YEARS LATER WONDER WOMAN CHANGED HER BOOTS FOR SANDALS. AT FIRST, THEY WERE HIGH-HEELED (AS IN THE STORY OF HER SANDALS ELSEWHERE IN THIS ISSUE.) HERE WE SEE THE FLAT-HEELED LOOK OF WONDER WOMAN #103; JAN., '59.
IN 1968, WONDER WOMAN LOST HER POWERS FOR A WHILE. DURING THE NEXT FEW YEARS, SHE ALWAYS DRESSED EITHER IN WHITE OR IN MOD CLOTHES FROM HER OWN BOUTIQUE.
(FROM WONDER WOMAN #197; NOV.-DEC. 1971.)
BUT NOW, THE AMAZING AMAZON IS BACK IN ACTION, WITH HER POWERS RESTORED -- AND WEARING A SLIGHTLY MODIFIED VERSION OF HER OLD COSTUME! (FROM WONDER WOMAN #205; MARCH-APRIL, 1973).
WONDER WOMAN'S COSTUMES

by Mark Marderosian © 1982

HOLOGRAM PICTURE STAR, NORMA DEAN, HAS BEEN KIDNAPPED BY FIVE-YEAR-OLD KENT MOOCLES AND TAKEN TO THE ENCHANTED WOODS. SPANKY HAS REACHED THE EDGE OF THE WOODS IN HIS QUEST TO BRING HER BACK

DON'T MOVE!

OOOOo! MY ACHING HEAD!

WAIT! THOSE EARS! KENT, IS THAT YOU?

NO, I'M DE YELLOW KID, YOUR FRIEND

WHY, YOU TWO-FACED...

BUT KENT SEZ YOU HAVE TO GO. SORRY!

OKAY, FIRE!

CLICK

ARGG!

AWR!

NEXT!

COME BACK! LET'S KISS AND MAKE UP!

BUMP!

ZIN!

HMM! JUST LIKE ALL MY LOVERS! THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND MY METHODS OF AFFECTION. NAME'S J.B. TANGENT. YOURS?

SPANKY

WELL, MY FURRY FRIEND, WHY WERE THEY TRYING TO KISS YOU TO DEATH?

SPANKY QUICKLY EXPLAINS HIS MISSION...

...AND IF I DON'T LOCATE HER SOON, THIS PLANET'S ORDER WILL FALL APART!

WELL, I HAVEN'T SEEN TWO PEOPLE LIKE THAT BUT IF SHE'S A MOVIE STAR SHE'S PROBABLY BEEN TAKEN TO THE "PALACE OF LIGHT"

OH? HOW DO I GET THERE?

FOLLOWING THIS TRAIL WILL LEAD YOU THERE. MIND IF I JOIN YOU?

NO

IT WILL TAKE US TWO DAYS TO REACH THE PALACE

GOOD, I'M ANXIOUS TO FIND HER

YOU HAVE TO BE CAREFUL HERE. THINGS ARE NEVER WHAT THEY-

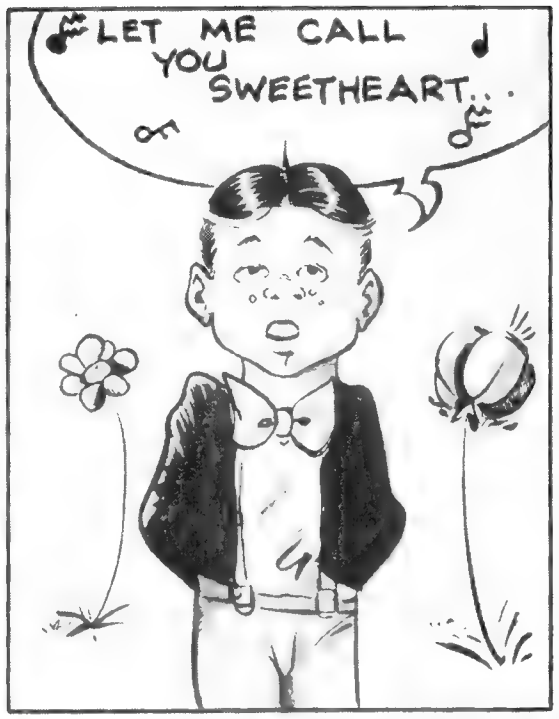
SNAP!

-SEEM!

KENT! IS THAT YOU?

NO, IT'S ME, ALFALFA!

YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME? I'LL PROVE IT! I'LL SING!


LET ME CALL YOU SWEETHEART...

...I'M IN LOVE WITH YOU!
WAK!

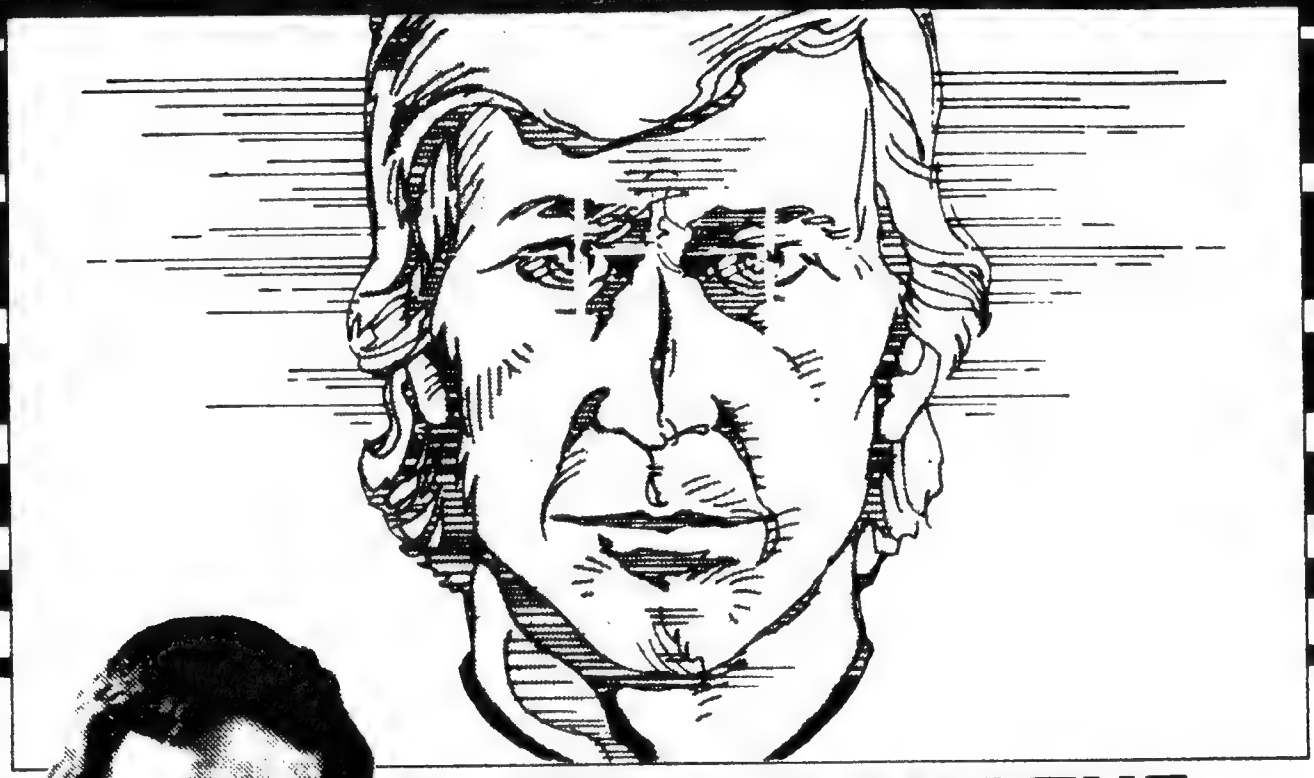
LET ME HEAR YOU WHISPER

THAT YOU LOVE ME TOO!

ARRGHH!

J.B.! WAKE UP!

STAR RIDER AND THE PEACE MACHINE



CAPTAINS AND THE STAR RIDERS

RICHARD COMELY INTERVIEW

By Maggie Thompson

CFF: What are you currently doing and what are you aiming for over the next year?

COMELY: Well, currently I'm working on the new magazine, **Star Rider**. Matter of fact, at this moment we're just putting issue #2 to bed, and I'm really hoping to make this magazine a success. Things are going well with it. You see, I also do other work as well as the magazine. I do design work and illustration—all kinds of other types of work. In a week, I might do a flyer and maybe design a label for somebody—lots of little jobs, local designs.

CFF: Freelance in Calgary?

COMELY: Yes, pretty well all of it from Calgary. A few I do for out of town, but it's all pretty small stuff, no big jobs. Nothing really fancy; most of the companies are smaller companies.

CFF: Do you do this by yourself or with a staff?

COMELY: I have one other girl for the summer only. As a matter of fact, she'll be gone in a little more than a week; back to design school, and then after that, I'll probably be working alone until a little later on—until I can afford someone else. But there'll be more staff in here after she leaves.

CFF: Do you tend to need someone more in the summer?

COMELY: No, no, not necessarily, although it did work out well this summer. For most people summer is the slow time and it is sort of generally for me too—not super-slow, but it does slow down because it slows down for everybody. I don't know if it's the same down there, but it sure is that way up here. But with the magazine this year, I had a few other customers that were just starting up this year so it was fairly busy.

CFF: What is the set-up as you produce **Star Rider**?

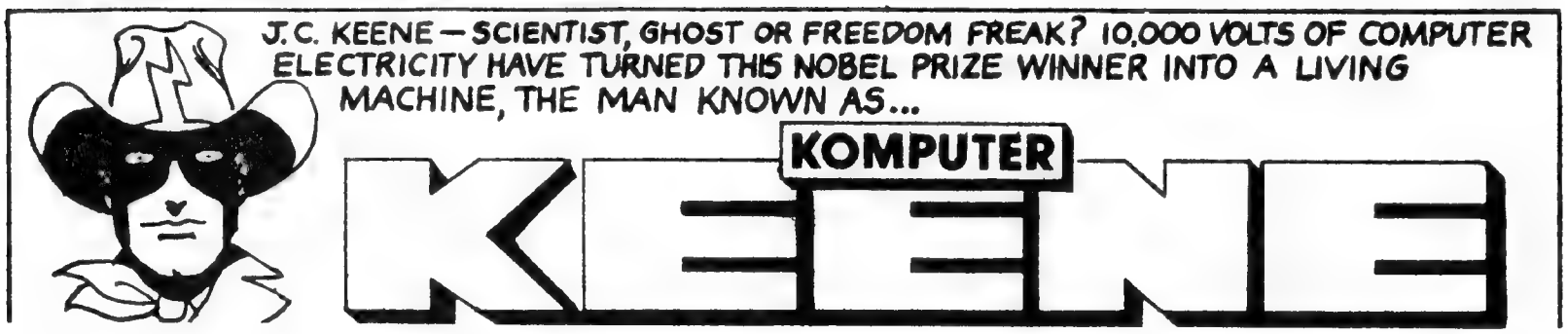
COMELY: Star Rider and the Peace Machine—you haven't seen the magazine—let me explain what it's like. It's in the same format as say, "Conan the Barbarian", "Savage Sword of Conan", "Bizarre Adventures"—all the Warren magazines are the same: 64 inside pages, full-color cover, black & white inside, magazine size. The way I'm presently working, right now I'm using two other artists who are illustrating two of the other features. There will be more added later and I'm still looking for some writers who could maybe do some other scripting as well. At the present time, I'm doing pretty much all of it.

CFF: Scripting on other features or scripting for the world you have designed?

COMELY: Star Rider and the Peace Machine has actually four titles in it. "Star Rider and the Peace Machine" is the main feature. "Komputer Keene" is in the first issue, but it was dropped. There was another one called "Steel Chameleon". Then there was another, a new one coming is issue #3 called "Ezra". They all have the same basic theme running through the stories. And it all has a very heavy geopolitical slant to them. Three of the features are all sort of futuristic: "Star Rider and the Peace Machine" starts out in the future and ends up, basically, in the present. "The Raft" is a post-holocaust-type story. "Steel Chameleon" is more of a James Bond type of thing. I don't know how to describe him; he's a present-day character who has a strange embroidery on his face from an accident—a metal plate. And "Ezra" is going to be another futuristic thing—2012 A.D. They all tend to have a similar theme: geopolitics, international intrigue, and global conspiracy. Now, world conspiracy is a very important element in the magazine, as well as its being part of a couple of the stories. It's not harped on in the stories, but they are elements of the stories. There is an article in the first two issues, a two-part article presented in the first two issues, and the article is mostly taken from about five books on the subject of what they call "the world conspiracy". It's an alliance between super-rich capitalists and the international communist movement to create a one-world government. There's an article dealing with that subject in the first two issues. So it does have a very strong, what people have been calling, "a social political message", for lack of a better term, I guess...

CFF: Do all of these stories take place in the same "universe"?

COMELY: They all take place in the same universe, so


J.C. KEENE—SCIENTIST, GHOST OR FREEDOM FREAK? 10,000 VOLTS OF COMPUTER ELECTRICITY HAVE TURNED THIS NOBEL PRIZE WINNER INTO A LIVING MACHINE, THE MAN KNOWN AS...
KOMPUTER
KEENE

to say, but they aren't necessarily related. For example, "The Raft" has no relationship with **Star Rider and the Peace Machine**. It's taking place in 1922, after a nuclear war.

CFF: Is there a possibility of a meeting between the characters of "The Raft" and "Ezra"?

COMELY: There are possibilities. For example, "The Raft" and, let's say, "Ezra" could be related. You could tie those two stories together. But I don't think you could tie the others together. "Ezra is also after a global war. It could be after Nuclear War II, you might say.

CFF: Are you worried about 1992 coming and having to reassign dates or not having to reassign dates?

COMELY: I'm really not worried about that, to tell you the honest truth. My projection of war...**1984** is a novel which I'm sure will stand the test of time; it still will be a classic, a piece of classic work, even if his predictions didn't really work out. So I'm similarly not worried about the date so much.

CFF: But are you planning to have this magazine have a 15-year life?

COMELY: Oh, I hope so! I'm stating in the second issue that this is an extension of our time. In other words, what we see happening in world events today culminates in war in the future—what "The Raft" is about: It starts out with two teenage boys who escape from a work camp in Soviet-occupied Eastern Canada. They're trying to get into the States, which is still free but fighting in the war. They meet up with other people and some of the people are sort of similar to **Logan's Run**, the TV version. They keep traveling and come across all kinds of different people living under different conditions, etc. But you could almost do the same story in World War II with a World War II setting.

CFF: Why was "Komputer Keene" dropped?

COMELY: I just got a lot of negative response towards it. It was sort of campy—I don't know how to describe it. Ric Estrada both wrote and illustrated it. I like Ric's illustrations a great deal, but his writing, as far as I'm concerned, isn't quite there yet.

CFF: Each contributor's material remains as contributed? You don't edit it?

COMELY: No, not really. In this case, I let it stand. In my opinion, it seemed kind of campy, but I thought we'd let it go in. He would have needed a total rewrite, I thought, in order to make it different in its perspective. I let it go in, but I thought, well, it might give a little bit of a different sort of flavor—a bit of variety besides all the other stuff; maybe something a little more comic-bookish, which it's more like. It's more like the old, corny stuff. It wasn't my character either. [Ric Estrada is a personal friend, by the way.] But if it were for "Steel Chameleon" [I'm looking for people to write for that one and have gotten a few people in], I'd find the right person—I work very closely with them. In the artwork, for example, I do work with Tom Grummett. He sends me photocopies of his pencils first and then I go over it and I say, "No, his head's too big here" or "Change this whole panel; it's got to be from a bird's eye view", you know what I mean? It works well. Tom Grummett is excellent. I think he's going to become another John Byrne.

CFF: Are you working with people in Calgary or are you working almost entirely by mail?

STEEL CHAMELEON IS THE GREATEST DISGUISE ARTIST THAT EVER LIVED!

COMELY: I have one other person in the mail; a newcomer to comic books. His name is Royston Evans. He's an art professor at the college here and an excellent designer. He won all kinds of awards as a designer and this is his debut into comic books. He's really in love with doing comic books. There's some really neat stuff in his first issue, but at the same time, it sort of lacks polish, as one letter-writer mentioned. His second issue is quite a bit better, but it is different than the usual comic-book illustrator. The design background really comes through.

CFF: How are you meeting deadlines? Are you on a regular schedule?

COMELY: For the second issue, I had a number of problems; one of them health problems. And it's late, really; it was later than I had planned to have it out. It's going to be a good month late. But issue #3 will be coming out in early November, and then issue #4 will be coming out right at the beginning of January; then we're going to go to a regular schedule, from there, a ten-times-a-year schedule. But it won't be an every-six-weeks type of schedule. It's going to be a schedule so that we come out in the peak selling periods for magazines, Summer and Fall. So in Summer and Fall,

they'll be closer together, but Winter will be a little further apart.

CFF: What's your distribution set-up?

COMELY: Distribution is on the newsstands, the mass market through a company called Disticor. They're a Canadian company who is based in Canada, but they operate in the U.S.

CFF: How about the specialty shops?

COMELY: I do that separately from here. I just sell to everybody: Bud, Pacific, everybody.

CFF: Do you then print more than you have presold? Do you take returns at all?

COMELY: There are returns on mass-market. You probably know the system. They get returns, but most of those are destroyed. The large percentage of them are destroyed. I'm able to pick up a few of them, but there's no returns on the direct sales, of course.

CFF: You're the first alternate publisher I've talked to who has a combination.

COMELY: I don't know if you could call me an alternate magazine, though. I think I'm what you would call a very small mainstream, I guess.

CFF: What are the advantages of each system to you, personally?

COMELY: Well, mass-market—you get large numbers out there. Of course, there are large numbers that are destroyed, which is something that all the companies are having to face and are concerned about. I think the average is about 70% of them that end up being destroyed. And with some titles, it's more and some it's less. That's sort of right across the board. But myself, as well as with the other main-line [publishers], also receive revenues from selling and space. You know, I'm running a few mail order ads in the magazine itself, and we get some from that as well. You don't make as much from newsstand sales, for sure, but if it's done carefully, it can still be profitable. But it isn't a very good profit margin any more for anybody. There were 69,000 copies of the first issue printed. Approximately 60 of those went to mass-market distribution. And the rest were for direct sales. There's only been about 6,500 sold to the direct sales, which is kind of low; I anticipated about 10. And my problem is, for example, I got a back

order from somebody and it wasn't a very big back-order, but it's the only one I'll be able to fill. I won't be able to fill any more back orders, so it's going to be rather a rare item on the direct market because of this 5,000 - 6,000 copies I thought were there that aren't there any more.

CFF: Are you going to reprint #1?

COMELY: I'd never reprint it as is. A couple of stories might be reprinted out of it. For example, I wouldn't redo the "Key" again. It would be the "Best of" type of thing. It would be a collection, further down the line. All the main lines do this, I guess.

CFF: And your print run for #2?

COMELY: It's 90,000 for #2 and about 10,000 of those will be for direct sales, maybe a little more, but all the rest will be in mass-market. #3 will be about 105—maybe 110, even on the print run. One of the things that's happening, you see, is that Disticor wasn't in certain areas with the first issue. But there will be more areas for #2 and there will even be a little more area for #3. They'll be pretty well everywhere by #3.

CFF: What else does Disticor distribute?

COMELY: Mine is the only illustrated-type magazine, but they distribute a lot of other magazines. Well, I shouldn't say "a lot" compared to the real big ones. They're smaller but they have about 30, maybe 40 magazines that they distribute - a lot of them Canadian. They have **Hockey News** [a better known one], **Black World** [an American one which is a quarter million copies per month type of thing], and they have many specialized magazines in sports, electronics, that whole thing.

CFF: Where do you want to be in publishing in five years?

COMELY: In five years from now I think what I'd like to have is maybe three magazines by then. Not all of them illustrated, though. Maybe one of them would be an editorial type magazine dealing with, let's say, conservative issues—political conservative type issues. I think possibly I would hope that I'd have a couple of illustrated magazines then. Maybe "The Raft" or "Ezra", for example, would spin off on its own. But I'm looking in the future—and not that far in the future—of going into magazines just for direct market. And maybe these

would be done with Pacific, for example. They've approached me for doing stuff for them, as they've approached a lot of people. They have a nice set-up; you do the work, you get the advance, and you get royalties on it. What they've really done is sort of taken the book publishing business and sort of adapted it to comics. And, in a way, I think that will be very workable, and it's obviously appealing because they're getting the biggest names.

CFF: How do you see yourself?

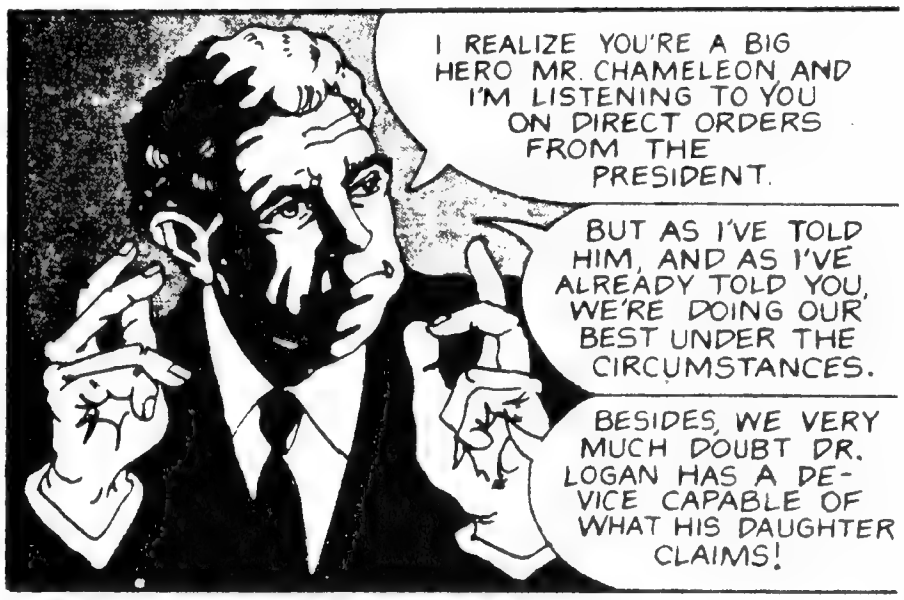
COMELY: I guess the way I would like it to work out is that I would be doing mostly editorial work, some scripting, and some art. I would be sort of overseeing the whole thing along with doing a bit of it. One of the things I'm finding is that doing the publishing and editorial duties is a full-time job, all by itself. And at the same time, I'm doing script and a fair chunk of the artwork myself, as well. Not only that, but we put together the ads here; everything is done here. Every work that is done here has to be typed here and then sent to a typesetter and then pasted up here.

CFF: How much of your day is spent on your publishing project?

COMELY: It's hard to break it up. You see, during the summer while I had this girl here, I've had her working on all these jobs that come in. I've just been sort of an art director; doing stuff that she couldn't do, so I was able to spend most of my time on the magazine. And that's the way it's going to continue, as far as I'm concerned, because there's just no way I can spend not even two hours a day on doing logo design and other stuff. It's just impossible now. I would say I probably work 55 hours a week—something like that. I don't work Sundays, but I do often put in hours on Saturday. At least at present I am. I probably will be for a few years. Other than that, I spend most of my time on the magazine.

CFF: Can you tell me some of the end of **Captain Canuk**?

COMELY: I was gone by then (#14). I left **Captain Canuck** after issue #12; it was the end of July 1980. In #13, I was given a credit for co-plotting—I think #13 was the issue that they announced that I had left. Issue #12 was when I finished and #14 was the last issue. By then I'd also sold my shares back to the other two owners. I owned 40% of CPR Producjtions, which was created in 1979, beginning of 1979. It was a very rocky partnership, which ended with my being dismissed by the other two partners who owned 60% in July 1980, and they wanted my 40% back. I ended up selling it back to them—call it "selling". They got it back about November or something of that same year. So really after that, I had nothing to do with it. But they were in financial problems; before I left they were. One of the problems was I really felt that it was being poorly managed, and was very earnestly concerned about that, and they found shortcomings with me, etc. So it led to them dismissing me. In a sense, I think they were doing me a favor because if I would have ended up seeing it right to the bitter end, I would end up owing 40% of the huge debt they owed. They did me a favor, and I certainly don't hold any grudges; I'm certainly not upset with anybody. I was disappointed that it worked out the way it did. It would have been nice if the whole thing could have been successful. It really had all the ingredients to be successful, but I guess at least one of the key ones—having real sharp financial management, sort of the promotion management of it—was missing. It couldn't keep going. There were many people who felt that Captain Canuck would be the Spiderman of the Eighties. And I think it could have been. But it needed some real keen, sharp management to be very...I don't think I could have supplied it either.


I REALIZE YOU'RE A BIG HERO MR. CHAMELEON AND I'M LISTENING TO YOU ON DIRECT ORDERS FROM THE PRESIDENT.
BUT AS I'VE TOLD HIM, AND AS I'VE ALREADY TOLD YOU, WE'RE DOING OUR BEST UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES.
BESIDES, WE VERY MUCH DOUBT DR. LOGAN HAS A DEVICE CAPABLE OF WHAT HIS DAUGHTER CLAIMS!

CFF: Tell me about your creative background.

COMELY: I somewhat have a real different beginning, I guess, from some of the others. I wasn't an avid comic-book fan way back. I've always drawn, ever since I was a child. I think I sort of always knew I'd be working in art, somehow, or in the creative endeavors. I started out working in sign shops and doing portraits as a teenager, and then went to work as a dress designer, an embroidery designer and then a fashion illustrator/designer and work that's very unrelated to comic books. Then I started to do some more artwork in the way of posters and other things. But a friend of mine, Ron Leichman, said to me, "It would be neat to have a Canadian comic book with a Canadian superhero." And he came up with a character which he called Captain Canada. There was already a couple of Captain Canadas floating around, so I said I thought it was a great idea, but we had to change the name, and sort of give him his own distinctive look and character and everything else, so I changed his name to Captain Canuck and came up with a story for him; an identity and the whole bit, and basically went from there.

CFF: Some Americans are worried lest "Canuck" be considered an insulting term.

COMELY: Do they consider "Yankee" an insulting term?

CFF: No.

COMELY: Well, no Canadian would ever get upset if you called him a Canuck. I mean, I don't know why anybody would worry about that. If an American came up here, I don't know if I'd call him "you Yankee". It does sound a **little** crass, but it'd be the same with "Canuck", I guess.

CFF: What are your literary or televisual influences?

COMELY: I've always loved good literature, and I can think of numerous books that I can remember and I think, to some degree influenced me. The books that many people have read too, like **Animal Farm, Lord of the Rings**. And I mention those two particularly because they both do have a little bit of a social/political thrust to them. There are many other books that don't. My mother is a writer—has been a writer for years, has a couple of books and sold numerous articles; **Reader's Digest Condensed** has done some of her stuff.

CFF: What is her name?

COMELY: Her name is Maureen Comely, but she uses Molly Douglas. Her books aren't gigantic best-sellers by any means.

"Liberal" and "conservative" are terms used in the States—because there's a Liberal and a Conservative party in Canada, you can cause confusion when you're talking to a Canadian. When I talk about conservative issues, I'm talking about things like many of the issues that you're talking about in the States. They all apply; bringing down the size of government, getting government out of people's lives, reducing socialism through government, etc. The trend has been in North America towards socialism. In Canada, we have socialized medicine and all kinds of stuff like that. And both the U.S. and Canada have been going down the same road toward socialism, but with Reagan in, you've sort of turned the corner a little bit. You've been getting away from it a bit. But Canada with Trudeau—whew—we're just heading straight for it. And we're having terrible, terrible consequences here. In Canada, for example, we've got a defecit that if compared to the States in comparison to size, etc., ours is like more than twice the size of yours. And I could tell you horror stories about this country that would make you glad that you're there.

CFF: Do you see yourself as any sort of force for change?

COMELY: I'm trying to do two things. You know, this magazine started **The Peace Machine**, and it is really an experimental thing. Nobody has ever tried to do this sort of blend before. It's almost like making a stew, trying to find the right ingredients, but it's a magazine that has sort of exciting, heroic, adventure-type stories with blends of science fiction in them. They all have that sort of geopolitical message/element to it. I don't think there's real, heavy social, political messages in the story, but at the same time, there's an article in the magazine and this article **is** talking about some movie that's being made or whatever—the latest thing in movies or whatever. It deals with a very, very heavy topic, and that is this alliance between capitalists and communists who eventually deprive us of freedom and control the world, the world's government.

CFF: You've mentioned Orwell and Tolkien. Have you done other heavy reading in these fields?

COMELY: No. I read a lot—a lot of all kinds of stuff, but I'm not a heavy science-fiction reader, by any means. I do read some. I'll tell you, my favorite science-fiction book is **Z for Zachariah** [by Robert O'Brien], and I think it's a juvenile fiction. In other words, it's meant for a teenage audience. It's clean—that's basically the only difference. It's excellent; a very well known book. I've read **The Martian Chronicles** [by Ray Bradbury]—fine writing. I guess what I'm doing is maybe more speculative fiction, maybe more so than science fiction. I don't know if there's really a big difference between the two, but you see, I haven't read an awful lot of fiction; maybe I've read four or five futuristic type stories. Most of them, like **Buck Rogers in the 25th Century**—that kind of stuff—doesn't appeal to me at all. It's just so meaningless to me. I guess one of the things I have this bent for is stuff that has some sort of real **meaning** and that can have some meaning in everybody's life. Whereas I can see Buck Rogers as having absolutely no meaning to anybody. It's just real frivolous entertainment. I just feel that if I'm going to print 90,000 copies of something, it should have some meaning to it, some relevance.

We were talking about futuristic type writing, which is what basically a lot of the stories are, holocaust type stories, etc. Being that I am a Mormon, a Latter-Day Saint, and have very, very strong beliefs in prophecy, an avid believer is scripture, I am a very avid believer that we're approaching the final days. We're in the period of the second coming and the milennium, the milennial reign. I see that as being very near in the future. As a matter of fact, I feel certain that we'll see that day before, let's say, 2020, 2025.

CFF: So you see "Ezra" within eight years of it?

COMELY: Yeah. You see, when I put all my dates—anything after 2030, we're into the milennial reign and everything is totally different. That's where I like to have that sort of degree of realism as part of the story. To me it's realism. Projecting stories like Buck Rogers is total fantasy.

CFF: Too far away?

COMELY: Right. I have a hard time with total fantasy—or I just don't find it interesting, I guess.

***

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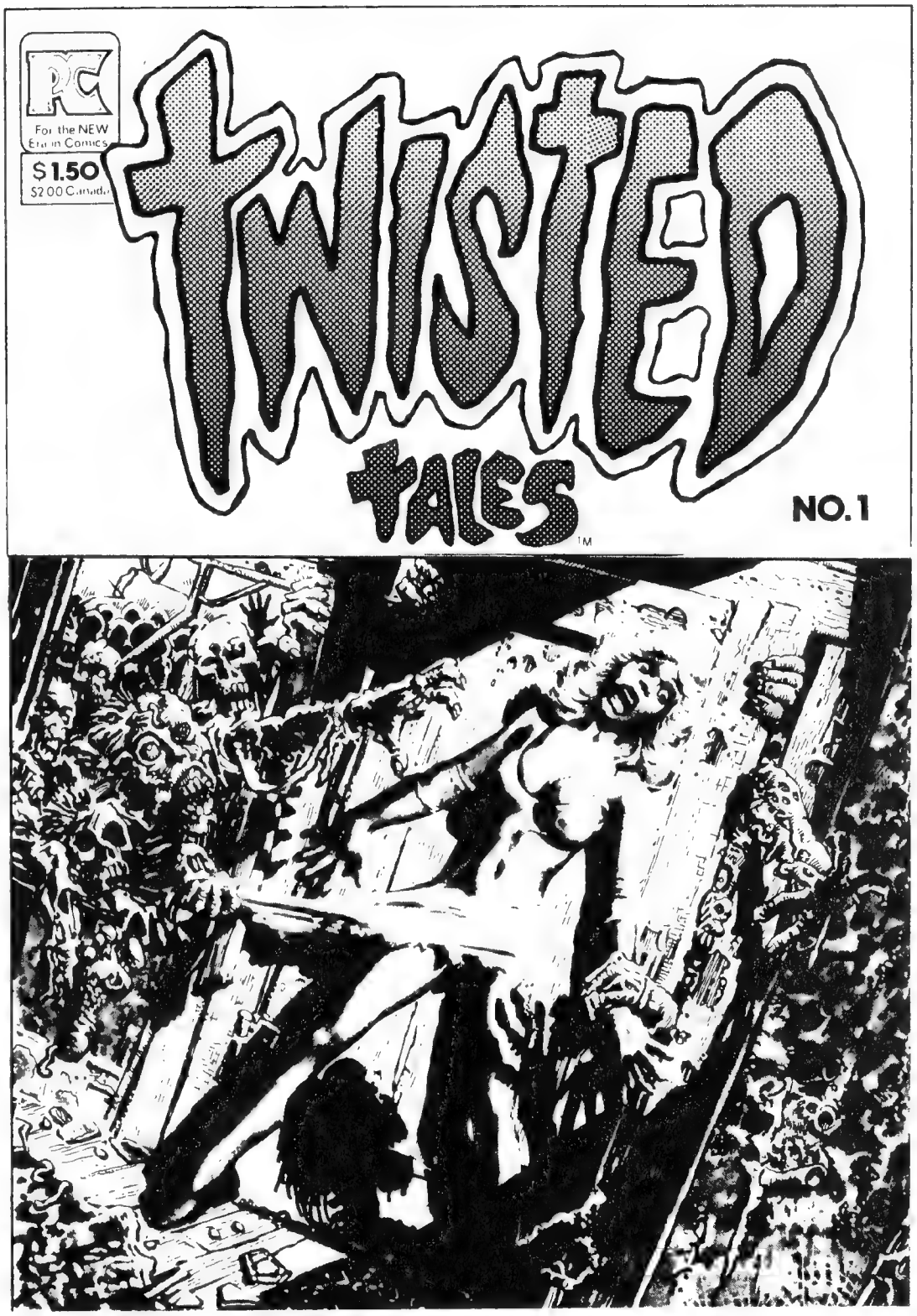

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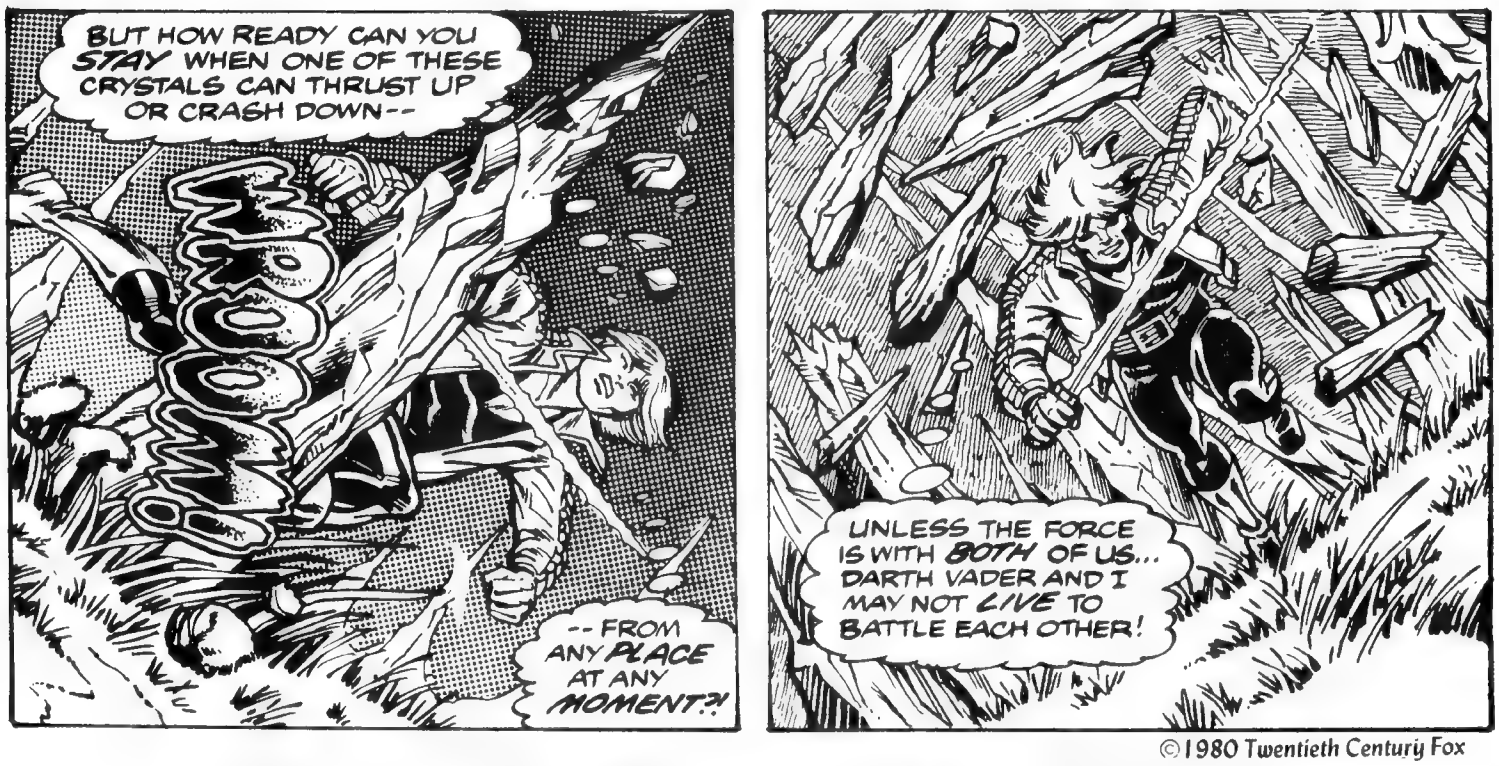
BUT HOW READY CAN YOU STAY WHEN ONE OF THESE CRYSTALS CAN THRUST UP OR CRASH DOWN--
KROOOOM
-- FROM ANY PLACE AT ANY MOMENT?!
UNLESS THE FORCE IS WITH BOTH OF US... DARTH VADER AND I MAY NOT LIVE TO BATTLE EACH OTHER!

©1980 Twentieth Century Fox

FATHER AND SON AS ANTAGONISTS

by Richard Morrissey

When *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*, the second film to appear (although the fifth in the internal chronology) in George Lucas' "*Star Wars*" series, was released in the Spring of 1980, the scene that viewers found of greatest interest was the final confrontation between the movie's hero and its villain: Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader, respectively. Luke—and the viewers—had previously been told by his mentor and trainer, Obi-Wan Kenobi, that Vader had been (like Luke's father and Kenobi himself) a Jedi Knight, a master of the semi-divine "Force." According to Kenobi, Vader had been "seduced by the dark side of The Force" and had "deceived and murdered [Luke's] father." However, during the confrontation in *EMPIRE*, Vader admitted the truth of Kenobi's first two statements but denied the third, stating instead that he was himself Luke's father. Luke at first found the statement impossible to believe, but by the end of the movie appeared to accept it, if not Vader's further offer to join him in overthrowing both sides of the conflict between the Galactic Empire and the rebellion with which Luke was involved.

The viewers, in the aggregate, found Vader's claim much harder to accept. Some did believe it, citing Luke's own mastery of The Force and the fact that "Vader" means "father" in Dutch, but others denied it, observing that Vader would be much more likely than Kenobi to lie and that his apparent revelation directly followed a physical demonstration of Vader's marked superiority to Luke in manipulation of The Force. A few even conceived their own bizarre theories, such as the possibility of Vader being a

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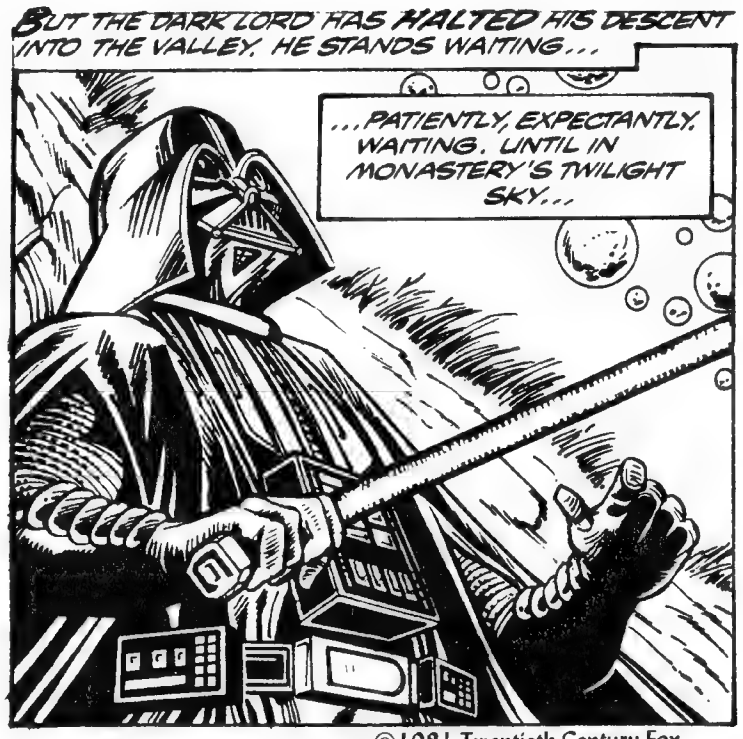
clone of Luke's father.

Such people completely missed the essential point of Darth Vader's statements—and of Obi-Wan Kenobi's, for that matter. The importance of these statements is not so much who *physically* fathered Luke as it is who *symbolically* fathered him—and, by extension, any hero. The story of Luke, like the stories of other classic heroes, deals with the development of one man's soul, and the use of father and son—in other senses than the physical, as antagonists, even within the same legend often applied to different characters—is one of the most powerful archetypes of heroic fantasy, and can be found in many of the classic myths and legends. The resurgence of heroic fantasy in many different media—including both juvenile and adult novels, films, and comic books—has seen several versions of this archetype in the past decade alone. By examining some other examples, I hope to shed more light on the universal significance of the idea.

An excellent use of a situation parallel to the one in STAR WARS to symbolize the dichotomies inherent in human nature, and in the relationships of human beings with both each other and with more powerful forces, can be found in Diana Wynne Jones' juvenile fantasy *DROWNED AMMET* (Atheneum, 1978). This novel, set in and around the imaginary province of Holand, Dalemark, concerns a villain and hero, also father and son, who have the same name: Alhammitt. Like human nature itself, the name is at the same time universal (it is mentioned several times that it's the most common name in Holand) and uniquely powerful (it is also shared by a god, the "Ammet" of the title, on whose reputation and—ultimately—power both father and son draw). Like Luke Skywalker, the 12-year-old hero (who usually goes by the nickname "Mitt") is a member of a revolutionary underground, this one devoted to the overthrow of the tyrannical earls of Holand. Mitt's father, who calls himself "Al," is, like Darth Vader, in the employ of the same tyrannical government which his son is rebelling against. But neither has any loyalty even to a tyrant: Vader is planning to overthrow the Emperor and seize the Imperial throne for himself, and Al is being paid separately—and for conflicting purposes—by several feuding members of the royal family. And again like Luke and Vader, Mitt and Al become aware of each other's existence only gradually, with the son in each case being shocked and horrified to discover the relationship after already having come to know and hate his father.

But in Mitt's case, Jones tells us, his ultimate disgust and revulsion isn't with his father at all, but with himself. Mitt "knew he had the potential in him to be as bad as Al," and his frequent fantasies, of violence and destruction, are Al's reality. In coming face to face with his father, Mitt—like Luke Skywalker and other heroes in the same position—is actually coming face to face with the evil within himself, and his own baser instincts. Al, originally a dedicated and idealistic revolutionary, has been led by his own violence and baser instincts into becoming a traitor even to his employers—and even to himself. Darth Vader was "seduced by the dark side of The Force," as well—and now the pattern is ready to repeat itself with their sons, as indeed it very often does in tragedy.

Both *STAR WARS* and *DROWNED AMMET* are epic, not tragic in form—and there is another alternative to the


BUT THE DARK LORD HAS HALTED HIS DESCENT INTO THE VALLEY. HE STANDS WAITING...
...PATIENTLY, EXPECTANTLY, WAITING. UNTIL IN MONASTERY'S TWILIGHT SKY...
©1981 Twentieth Century Fox

"The importance ... is not so much who physically fathered Luke as who symbolically fathered him."

betrayal and degradation represented by Al and Vader. Al may be Mitt's father, but he isn't his *only* father—after he deserted Mitt's mother, she married the honest and gentle gunsmith Hobin. It was Mitt's stepfather who was responsible for his own expertise with weapons, and many of his own ideals—and it is ultimately Mitt's ideals, together with his horror at what he *might* become, that turn him away from the path of evil and toward the path of the true hero. Similarly, Luke Skywalker had another symbolic father in Obi-Wan Kenobi himself, who also trained him in the other, "light" side of The Force. (In *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*, Kenobi's role is supplemented by that of the older Jedi Knight, Yoda.)

An even more deliberately archetypal rendering of the significance of the hero's father as both external and internal adversary can be found in Jack Kirby's *NEW GODS*, a DC comic book which ran for 11 issues from 1970 through 1972. It was edited, written, and drawn by Jack Kirby. (It was revived in 1977 for eight more issues written by Gerry Conway and pencilled by Don Newton, but the general consensus is that Conway failed to grasp even the literal—let alone the symbolic significance of Kirby's original concept.) All the elements previously discussed in *STAR WARS* and *DROWNED AMMET* were present in their most fundamental form, but in a setting that set them off even more clearly. The main hero, Orion, was the son of the principal villain—whose name, Darkseid, could hardly make his psychological significance any more evident. Once again the hero had been separated from his father at an early age and raised by a benevolent stepfather—Izaya, also known as Highfather. But in this case, both Highfather and Darkseid had far greater significance in that each was the ruler of an entire planet—and those two planets, New Genesis and

Apokolips, respectively, had many more inhabitants who represented innumerable other aspects of the good and evil present in both the individual and the collective human mind. These characters reflected other significant themes in human society (as in the manner in which Metron, like the science he loved, was born of the good in New Genesis but could very easily be perverted to serve the evil of Apokolips), but for the purpose of this article I shall concentrate on the principal triumverate of Orion, Highfather, and Darkseid.

"He was usually with a very handsome and placid face—but in moments of extreme anger and the excitement of battle his real face, an ugly and distorted one, would replace it."

WE MUST BE BROTHERS YOU AND I--- DIFFERENT SIDES OF THE SAME COIN. TRUE SONS OF DARKSEID--- THE ESSENCE OF HIS CREED OF TOTAL VIOLENCE!
WERE DARKSEID MY FATHER, HE WOULD HAVE BUT ONE TRUE SON: KALIBAK! KALIBAK!

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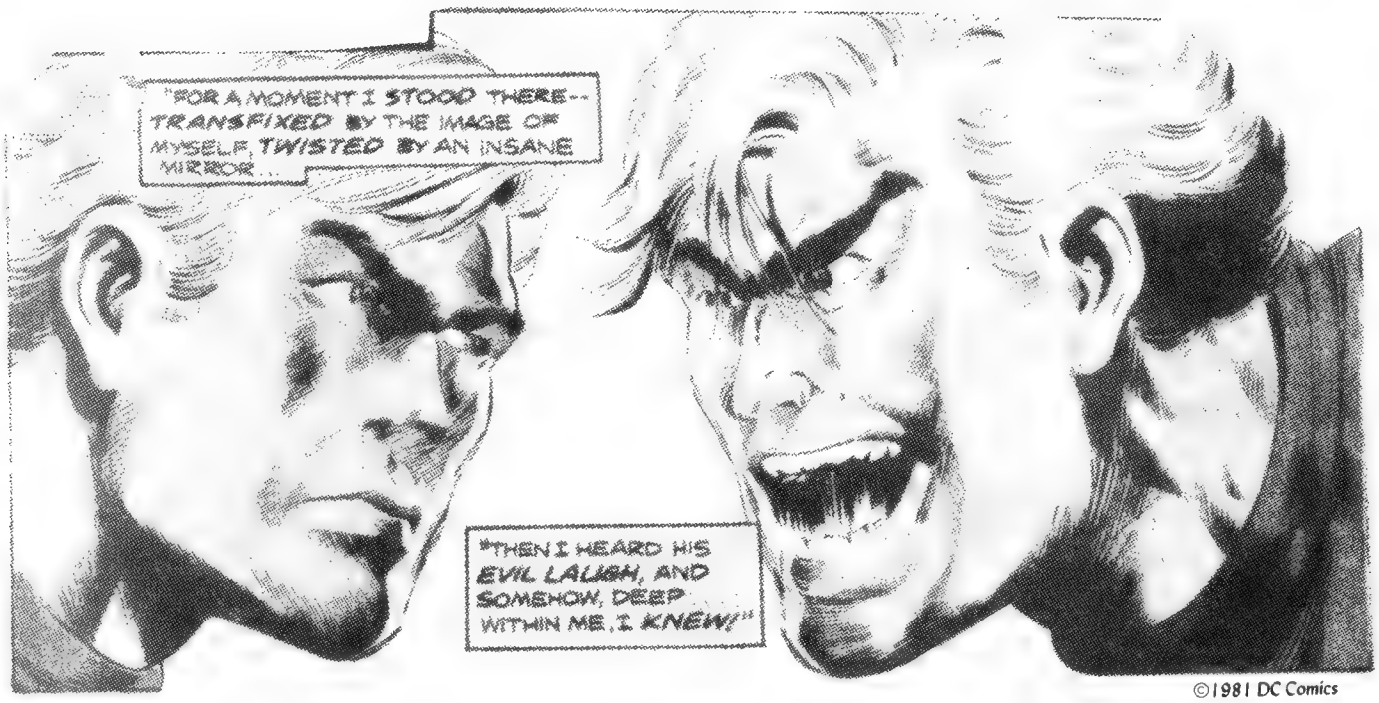
"The supreme irony in Orion's situation is that he is the greatest and most important warrior of New Genesis...because of his descent from the ruler of Apokolips."

The most unusual aspect of Orion was the way his conflicting heritage and mental state was reflected in his face. He was usually seen with a very handsome and placid face—but in moments of extreme anger and the excitement of battle his *real* face, an ugly and distorted one, would replace it. Like Luke and Mitt, Orion never realized his father's identity until near the end of his story—but he did understand and wonder about his true face, and would take the first opportunity to restore his handsome features with the aid of a small computer called the "Mother Box." I will return to the significance of *that* name later, but for the time being the subject of greatest interest appears to be what that distorted face represents—and its ultimate importance to the forces of good.

The supreme irony of Orion's situation is that he is the greatest and most important warrior of New Genesis despite his descent from the ruler of Apokolips—no, *because* of his descent from the ruler of Apokolips. Highfather, like Kenobi and Hobin, may be the most important force for good in a hero's development, but none of them *are* heroes of the caliber of Orion, Luke, and Mitt. All represent the good side of humanity, its idealistic and constructive side—but there are times, especially when dealing with true evil, when idealism and constructiveness are not enough. Both Hobin and Kenobi prefer to take noncombative, uncommitted positions in the conflicts going on around them; Highfather was once a warrior but has rejected that life for a position of strictly nonviolent leadership. All three limit their involvement to the training and deliberately limited aid of younger heroes. Kirby tells us through Orion and his face that even the evil part of Orion's heritage—the evil that, if not always visible, exists in us all—has its uses, if kept firmly under control by one's better nature and allowed to express itself only against other evil. So Mitt used the darker, unchecked power of the god Alhammit against his father—and so Luke Skywalker can even use the *dark side* of the Force if he is careful not to be seduced by it. (I have heard that George Lucas read and was partially influenced by the *New Gods* series, but the archetypes are universal enough that he, like Diana Wynne Jones, may well have arrived at them completely independently.)

A brief look at two other uses of the father-son conflict in comic books may illuminate a few additional facets of the


"FOR A MOMENT I STOOD THERE-- TRANSFIXED BY THE IMAGE OF MYSELF, TWISTED BY AN INSANE MIRROR...
"THEN I HEARD HIS EVIL LAUGH, AND SOMEHOW, DEEP WITHIN ME, I KNEW!"
©1981 DC Comics

idea. Jim Shooter introduced the villainous Stargrave in his last "*Legion of Super-Heroes*" story (*SUPERBOY AND THE LSH* #224), and apparently revealed him to be Kajz Dox, the father of the Legion's own Brainiac 5. However, in *S/LSH* #237, Gerry Conway attempted to clarify that origin, revealing Stargrave instead as the original Brainiac, the evil android computer who had battled Superman in the 20th century. This revelation was lamented, and often denied, by many Legion fans, who felt that Conway had mishandled Shooter's conception as badly as he did Jack Kirby's in *THE NEW GODS*. And yet, so powerful is the archetype that it retains its significance no matter who Stargrave is taken to be—just as, as it has been observed, Darth Vader's role as a symbolic father for Luke will remain even if it is revealed that he is *not*, after all, Luke's physical father. (Another Kirby title tied in with *THE NEW GODS* had as its title character Mister Miracle, whose background was the exact opposite of Orion's. He had Highfather for a real father and was raised by the minions of Darkseid, but his story, too, ended on an optimistic and heroic note.)

Ironically enough, Brainiac's own relationship to Brainiac 5 paralleled Stargrave's—he, too, was originally intended to be human and the great-great-grandfather of Brainiac 5, as the latter's very name indicates. The decision of later writers to make them both one and the same humanoid machine reflects the increasing concern over the ubiquity of machines and the increasing part they play in human lives—often displacing humans even to be reaching young people their ideals and views of the world, as with the immense amount of television now watched by the average child. But it's not as frightening an idea *all* the time, as indicated both by the advent of *good* educational programs like *SESAME STREET* and the fact that science (remember Metron) is not inherently either good or evil. Kirby's "Mother Box" might have been a frightening image in a way, but she was also a very positive one.

Indeed, Mother Box' name brings up a matter that is easy to ignore in a discussion of the hero's father as a villain—the fact that a person has *two* parents, not just one. Mother Box was literally the only mother either Orion or Mister Miracle (who built his own Mother Box) ever knew; Orion's mother was locked away by Darkseid and Highfather's wife was killed by Darkseid's machinations. Indeed, the evil side of human nature often finds it very easy to suppress or kill other influences—but, as the experiences of the heroes makes clear, one's own good impulses can never die if one does not allow them to do so himself. Although Lucas, Jones, and Kirby have all balanced the scale more evenly by giving their heroes two fathers, a father and a mother could, especially in these egalitarian times, play analogous roles.

"And yet, so powerful is the archetype that it retains its significance no matter who Stargrave is taken to be..."

As, indeed, the parents of Raven have played recently in the early issues of *THE NEW TEEN TITANS*. In Raven's case, *both* her good and evil mentors are her real parents—the evil being represented by her father, the demon Trigon, and the good coming from her mother, the peaceful Arella. The depiction of evil and violence as "masculine" and good and passivity as "feminine" is itself an old and rather outdated idea, which is probably why most other writers have avoided it in recent years. But Raven, although a woman, combines the same elements of good and channeled evil as her heroic predecessors of the opposite sex. She forms The New Teen Titans, and ultimately prevails—even if at the expense of eternal conflict between her father and her self-sacrificing mother, a physical extension of the conflict in her own mind.

On that note, I shall leave the subject—although the different possibilities and variants of the archetype have only begun to be explored. In particular, what of the situation in which there is conflict between a good father and an evil son, as in the legend of King Arthur and Sir Mordred, rather than an evil father and a good son? This too has a great deal of symbolic significance, but by its very nature it reflects a more pessimistic view of the world. That is the main reason why I, like many other writers of epic fantasy, prefer the more optimistic approach—in which the younger generation represents the hopes, rather than the fears, of humanity.

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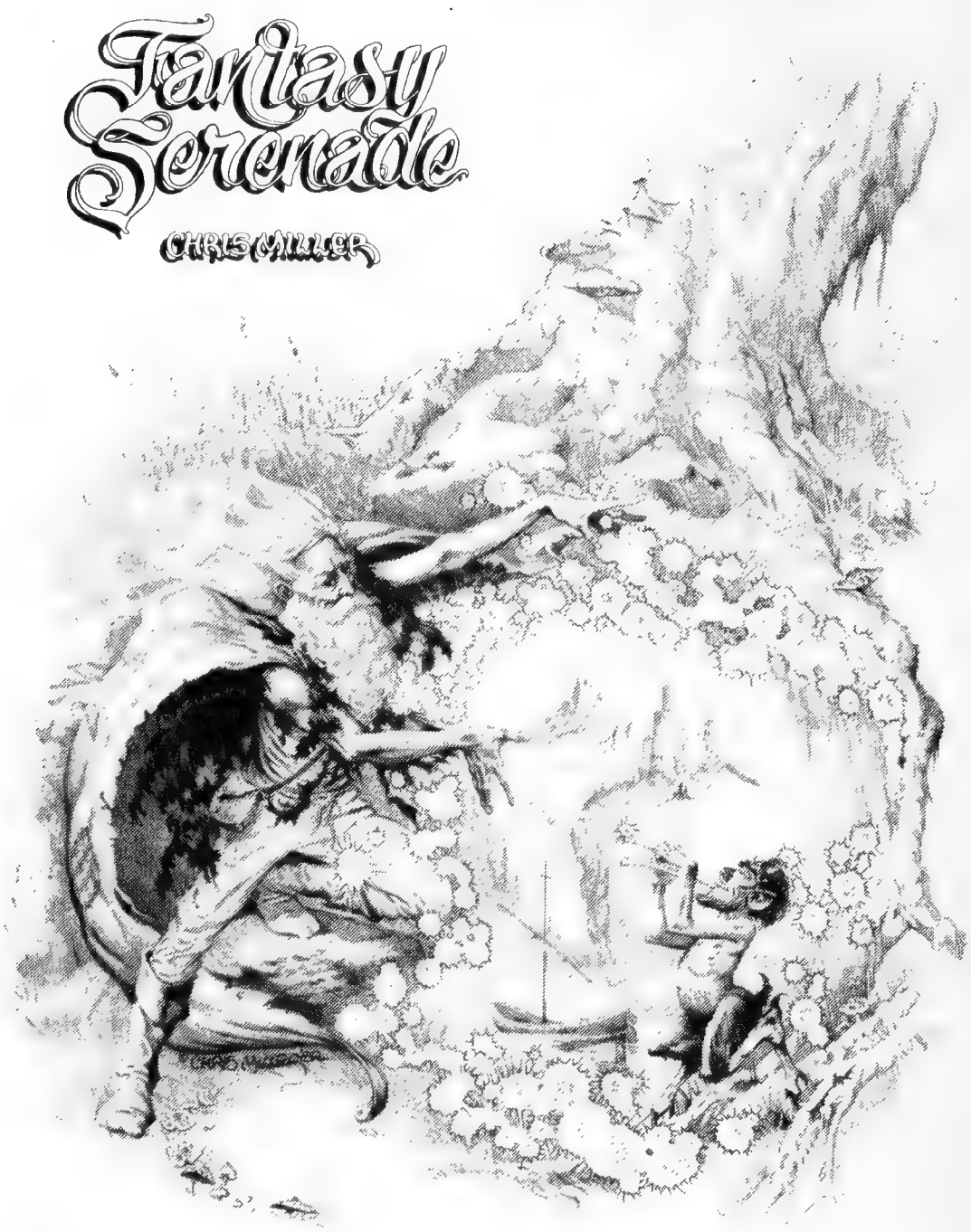

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Reflections In An Emerald Eye

[Part 3]

by Paul Balze

The 1979 issues of **Green Lantern** contained some truly bizarre characters and events. In fact, I often wonder if some of the villains weren't created with weirdness in mind from the start. Nineteen seventy-nine marked the end of the "Green Lantern/Green Arrow" series, after several issues in which the two heroes were frequently separated.

Green Lantern #113, "...That They May Fear No More!", was a Christmas story. It was unfortunate it appeared before Thanksgiving. O'Neil brought back **two** sets of bizarre characters this time: The Slog [the self-proclaimed punk rock band from #108] and those wildly superstitious, gun-totin' hill folks, Zeb, Lem & Granny Bleach [from **Batman Family** #19]. They met up with Green Lantern, Green Arrow and Black Canary through a large dose of coincidence.

As #113 begins, it's Christmas Eve, and Hal Jordan is trucking through the mountains during a blizzard when a sudden earth tremor [accompanied by a shower of sparks] pitches the car into a ditch. Hal switches to GL and pulls out—the Slog. Besides the three dudes from #108, there's also one member's **very** pregnant wife, Marcy. Hard as it is to believe, only two of the four have names; the Asiatic-looking Rance and Marcy. For convenience, I'll call the other two Derby and Father-To-Be.

The Slog have fallen on hard times, it seems. First, their instruments were stolen, then they were shafted out of their pay. Now, they're stranded in the mountains. GL graciously volunteers Hal's rig to drive them to shelter. Following the obligatory ring-charging scene, we meet the Bleach clan, who have watched the whole business from above.

"Yew see it, Granny?"

"—'at there car catched fire an' put itself out!"

"Yeah...an' the folks flew!"

Wal, hack far, didn't they see thet thar Lantern feller use 'at nifty ring o' his'n? Hard t'miss thet big green glowin' hand thar. Now, how d'yew s'pose Granny explains them goin's on?

" 'Twas the woman with child musta done it! Musta been!"

Don't you just love the way her mind works? Granny reminds her boys [I don't know how many generations separate Granny and the boys. They're grown men and she looks to be anywhere from 70 to 200 years old!] about a legend that says "an unborn babe will perform miracles" and "set [them] free" before "the mountain destroys" them. But first, they've gotta get that baby.

[Heavy Christmas symbolism there, gang...]

A little while later, Hal brings the Slog to a ski lodge occupied by Ollie Queen and Dinah Lance [whom all good GL fans know as Green Arrow and Black Canary]. [Isn't coincidence wonderful?] Ollie's in his GA outfit for some reason involving "holiday colors" and, after a shot of "Uncle Arrow's Curl-Your-Teeth-And-Clean-Your-Sinuses Holiday Punch," the merrymaking begins. It's shortlived, though. Hal steps out for some firewood and is promptly clobbered by one of the Bleaches, who takes the ring [I wonder how? It seems to me that a charged power ring can't be removed except by Hal.].

Minutes later, the Bleaches crash the party and [thanks to Derby's clumsiness] swiftly gain the upper hand. After tying up Ollie, Dinah, and the Slog, they take Marcy away with them through the snow. That's right, she could give birth at any minute and they're gonna make her walk miles through a blizzard. Maybe that's why there're only three Bleaches left.

The Arrow quickly cuts himself free with an arrowhead and soon he, Dinah, Hal, and Father-To-Be are skiing after the Bleaches.

Suddenly, the mountain gives up its secret! It's a long-dormant volcano, which is now erupting. Just as the Bleaches reach the Ranger shack, they are attacked by wolves [Oh, no, Yuri, what shall we do? Stay here, Olga, while I go for the Alpo!], but—Ta ta-**Taaa**! It's the Cavalry—er, Hal, Ollie, and Dinah!

The mountain starts to heave.

Hal talks the Bleaches out of the ring.

He disposes of the wolves.

Then, he bores a big hole in the mountainside, allowing the lava to run into the valley below, thereby saving the day—er, night.

At the story's end, Marcy has delivered her baby and all is well as the Slog and the Bleaches toddle off to comics oblivion.

They were followed in **GL #114** by someone even weirder—the Crumber! He did just that...crumbled things. With his red-and-orange ensemble, he wore a silver glove which would disintegrate anything he touched. Alas, he forsook the potentially-lucrative field of breadcrumb-making to become a criminal.

As the story begins, Hal is hauling a load of "liquid gas" to a construction site [despite the protests of Green Arrow] when the Crumbler destroys a bridge on which, inexplicably, a gigantic bulldozer is parked. The 'dozer, of course, slides down the mountainside to slam into Hal's truck, ripping a hole in the trailer. Hal quickly changes to GL, rights the truck and the house-sized 'dozer, and seals the truck in a force field. Then he dashes into the woods to recharge his ring and is promptly bashed with a tree by the Crumbler, who seems strangely sorry. "I didn't mean to...to kill him!" the Crumbler whimpers. He changes his mind pretty quickly, though. "I suppose I should steel myself against any kind of...regret...**other** deaths are probably inevitable when I exercise my power!"

The Lantern, of course, isn't dead, and news of his hospitalization brings Green Arrow and Black Canary to the

THAT'S ROTTEN! THAT'S SO ROTTEN!
THE WORST PART IS, THERE'S NOBODY TO BLAME--
--THERE'S NOBODY TO HATE!
HE DOES NOT WEEP! HE OUGHT TO... BUT HE DOES NOT!
NEXT: PROFESSOR OJO'S SCHEME — THE DEADLIEST OF PLANS. YET NOT HALF AS DANGEROUS AS GREEN LANTERN'S STRUGGLE WITH HIMSELF!
-END-

scene, where they meet the extremely caustic Alexander Percy Tuttle, whose construction company Hal was trucking the gas for. After a quick snarling match between Tuttle and GA, Ollie decides to go visit GL in the hospital. As GA talks to GL's doctor, they are watched by the Crumbler. [Why? Who knows? Maybe so GA can pick a fight with him outside.] Ollie uses the old reliable net-arrow, which the Crumbler promptly dissolves. GA's impressed. "Wait **up**!" he shouts, "I'd like you to teach me that trick! I've got a whole heap of bills at home I'd like to get rid of!" The Crumbler dissolves the roof under GA's feet. [Guess he didn't like the joke.] The Lantern tries desperately to leave the hospital, but the nurse stops him. "Got to...warn them...", he groans. "Mis-ter Lantern! You're being very naughty! You must stay in bed! Doctor's orders!" She then puts him back to bed, where he passes out again. Just like that, no "Warn who? What about? What's the matter?", just, "Git back in that bed and shut up!" What a bedside manner!

When the Arrow returns to the construction site, he hears that Tuttle's company is "on the verge of bankruptcy!". Tuttle shows up with two musclemen, whom he sics on GA and BC, who quickly annihilate them. Tuttle blows up. "You brutalize my employees! You wreck my hospital!" [Bad move, Tuttle! You blew your cover!]

Yes, Tuttle is the Crumbler. He's used the funds for the construction project to develop his crumbling glove, with which he can "Cancel the force which binds atoms together!" He was sabotaging the project for the insurance money, which would be used to complete the project. Just as he's about to crumble the Arrow and the Canary, the Lantern shows up. He's panicky. Seems he created the force field around the truck from nothing, rather than from existing elements, and when the ring's charge wears off in a few minutes, the field will dissipate. There's now a roaring fire only a few yards from the truck. GL's too woozy to work the ring as the field starts to vanish, so it's up to Green Arrow to save the day by throwing snow on the fire, thereby reducing GL to a useless lump of flesh for 90% of an issue of his own book! GL doesn't even get to stop the Crumbler, because he escapes while GA is keeping the truck from blowing up!

The tables are turned in #115, though, as GA and BC spend the whole issue in the hospital, while GL does all the work. After helping GL find his power battery and sending him back to the hospital, GA and BC hop into their borrowed VW bus to go after the Crumbler.

They find him quicker than they thought. The Crumbler has had car trouble at the far end of a bridge and soon Ollie & Dinah are bearing down on him. [Now, they could have just rolled up behind him and taken him by surprise, but, apparently GA thinks it's better to come roaring up on a villain so that he can see you coming a mile away.] Tuttle whips into his Crumbler outfit and gleefully destroys the bridge, sending Ollie and Dinah through the ice and into the frozen river, bus and all. Dinah gets them out, though, by melting through the ice with Ollie's "phosphorus arrow". [Good thing Ollie just happened to have an arrow with a phosphorus head, isn't it?] What Ollie later told the owner of the van went unrecorded.

GA and BC are brought into the hospital just as GL is arguing with his doctor over whether or not he can be discharged. After finding out what happened from GA, the Lantern settles the issue by taking off after the Crumbler...

...who, as Alex Tuttle, is consulting a psychiatrist, thereby making himself unique [to my knowledge] among metally unbalanced villains. There, he tells his life's story. How he was a scientific genius, but his father didn't care. The father comes off as an unbelievably callous and unfeeling character, made even more incredible when GL meets him later, and it turns out that the Crumbler didn't exaggerate! As Tuttle tells of the previous issue's events, the shrink tells him that his time is up. Tuttle snaps. He leaps up in a rage, dissolves the couch, kills the shrink, and begins a rampage through Star City, crying, "He's no different from

my father! They're **all** like my father! I'll fix them— I'll make them come to me on their knees! They'll crawl to me—they'll beg me—yes, that's it...they'll beg me—**He'll** beg me!"

Whew!

When the Lantern catches up to him, the Crumbler has holed up inside a multi-story office building and is threatening to collapse it if anyone comes near. Ah, but GL doesn't have to come near, does he? He can just aim through the doors and zap Tuttle with a power beam, right? Wrong! The beam won't reach, possibly due to GL's head injury. Since brute force hasn't worked, GL has to come up with something else...fast! You see, the Crumbler has dissolved half the building's support pillars and there are 300 people inside! The Crumbler shouts that his father has to "apologize to me!". [Fine, except that I got the impression that GL didn't know who the Crumbler really was.] Somehow he connects with Morris Tuttle. Dig this conversation:

Tuttle: Apologize? You ask me to apologize to that snotty kid of mine? In a rooster's ear I'll apologize!

Lantern: Can't you **understand**? Three hundred innocent people will **die**!

Tuttle: That is their tough luck! My business is construction, not taking care of a bunch of idiots I don't know!

Real likable guy, ain't he? But it doesn't stop there!

Tuttle: I only hope my kid manages to kill **himself**, too! It'll be the first thing he's ever done **right**!

Boo! Hiss! Throw rocks at him!

GL finally nabs the Crumbler by hauling him through the floor into the building's basement and then cold-conking him [which he could have done in the first place, but we won't go into that]. GA and BC recover from their injuries and the Crumbler goes off to the nut factory for a while. Interesting point: I can understand leaving GL and GA's masks on while they're in the hospital, but I hardly think that leaving on a long, wet wig is the best thing for a double-pneumonia patient. Yet, Dinah is shown in a hospital bed twice while wearing her blonde wig—once, while in an oxygen tent! Also, why didn't they put GL in one of those hospital gowns, like they did GA? And to top it all off, GL is wondering if it was his head injury that made the ring fail, or something else. As he wonders, the power battery glows with "a wan, yellow light—a light that **shouldn't be there**!"

Presumably, it's still there in #116 when GA summons GL about a huge eye which has appeared over Star City. When GL arrives, GA is shooting arrows at it. Honest! The thing must be a thousand feet up, and he's shooting arrows at it! Now, I don't care **how** good you are, you're not gonna hit anything a thousand feet up with an arrow! You'll hit a lot of things a few blocks away, though...like windows. And cars. And people. Tired of wasting arrows, the Arrow asks the Lantern to try the ring on it. The beam doubles back, wraps itself around GL like a snake, squeezes him, and suddenly unwraps, hurling him against a wall. Then, enter the vile villain, Professor Ojo! He's watched it all, via the eye. He has a plan, but he won't reveal it just yet. Not even to his butler.

Back in Star City, Hal decides to zip off to Oa to have himself and the ring checked out, despite Ollie's protests. Frankly, I agree with Ollie. I know **I** wouldn't want to leap halfway across the universe on a possibly faulty ring! A guy could get killed that way! But then, Hal ain't me, so off he goes.

Next morning, Ollie Queen sees what appears to be Hal charging his ring—and shattering like glass! But before the shocked archer can figure out what happened, who should arrive but Guy Gardner, the alternate Green Lantern [last seen in **GL #87**]. Following intros and the usual ring-charging, the two set off to find the eye. Shouldn't be too hard to trace, after all...just check around to see who's ordered a tanker of Visine lately!

Meanwhile, Hal warps off to Oa—and winds up in a totally unfamiliar desert on a different planet—or so it seems...

Back on Earth, Ollie and Guy find the eye. Ollie hits it with an explosive arrow, to no effect. Then, in retaliation, it collapses a wall on him, but Guy saves him. As the eye flees, Guy fires a beam at it and misses. Tough break, Guy! Maybe next time...Stand up straight, man! Stop pouting!

Hal soon discovers that he's on the "desert side" of Oa, where the Guardians dropped him pending positive identification. They examine Hal's ring and determine that "the energy is not working properly! It will not respond to certain of your commands!" Well, that's pretty obvious, don't you think? "A further effect might be a time distortion—future events will appear in the **present**!"

Hmmmmmm

THE TRUTH IS, MISTER GARDNER'S MIND IS DAMAGED IN A WAY I'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE!
WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO CURE HIM AND WE MIGHT NOT!
MAYBE IN SIX MONTHS I'LL KNOW!
EXCUSE ME!
HELLO, HAL!
KARI! YOU OVERHEARD?
BENTLEY

The "difficulty" is in the battery, so the Guardians give Hal a new one and advise him to destroy the old one, since it could become "extremely **dangerous**!"

And Guy is using that battery!

With renewed confidence, Hal rockets back to Earth. Meanwhile, having proven his bravery by daring to eat Ollie Queen's killer child, Guy zips out and blows away Ojo's big eye. Just like that. "There it is!", **fa-choom**!, "Bye, eye!" Boy, is Guy thrilled! Golly gee whiz, I'm a Green Lantern now, boy! I can't **wait** to recharge my ring! Hal returns and explains all to Ollie and Dinah. When Ollie tells Hal about the explosion, Hal realizes that it could be foretelling Guy's fate. He blasts away the wall [This guy's hell on property values, isn't he?] just in time to see Guy get blown away and vanish, just as the battery showed before. The story ends with Hal, Ollie and Dinah mourning Guy...

Despite the flying eye's destruction, Prof. Ojo remained free. He had another eye as the beginning of **GL #117** shows. In fact, he uses it to bust the Crumbler out of Arkham Asylum, right under GL and GA's noses! While the Arrow goes off to search for the eye [and finds Ojo and the Crumbler almost immediately], GL has to inform Guy's loved ones of his demise. "Loved Ones" consists of one young gypsy fortune teller: Kari Limbo. Hal shows immense respect for Guy's memory by falling in love with Kari almost instantly. Some friend, huh?

GA, meanwhile, finds Prof. Ojo's lair under an optometrist's shop in a shopping mall! That's right, under a shopping mall! Talk about implausible! But that's nothing compared to Ojo himself. For one thing, his name really is Ojo. He has no eyes, due to his scientist-father's exposure to radiation during an early atomic experiment. Ojo's a genius, which enabled him to develop his nifty little helmet, which works like a TV camera, even when he's not wearing it—God knows **how**. This lets him get the drop on the Arrow and knock him out, making him easy pickin's for the Crumbler. Thanks to another one of those great coincidences so popular in comics, Kari Limbo has the psychic ability to sense when others are in danger, and so lead GL to Ojo's hideout where he trashes the Crumbler in the nick of time. Instead of doing the sensible thing [i.e., wrapping up Ojo and the Crumbler for safekeeping], GL stops to introduce Kari to Ollie. As GA is kissing Kari's hand, Ojo reveals another neat accessory on his helmet, a blackout ray similar to that used by Phantom Lady [available at extra cost on all 1983 Dodge Diplomats]! Under the cover of the impenetrable darkness, Ojo and the Crumbler escape, setting us up for #118's "Hell Quest!"

By now, it's obvious that Kari has some sort of actual psychic ability. As she explains it, "I touch something and I get **visions**!" Then, of course, she contradicts herself by only "sensing" where Ojo and the Crumbler "**may** be", either in New York, or just outside of Star City.

Green Arrow flits off to New York, and soon finds himself at the headquarters of G.O.O.D. [**G**lobal **O**rganization of **O**rganized **D**efense], where he punches, nets, and bombs his way into the office of Barney Ling, the head of G.O.O.D. Ling reveals more about Ojo, including his insane hatred of atomic energy and his plans for some sort of attack on it "very soon".

The other point on the map turns out to be a nuclear power plant, and it is there that the Crumbler reveals himself by using his modified glove [now he only has to point it at things, instead of having to touch them] to try and kill his father. Green Lantern saves Nasty Morris, who's about as grateful as someone who's just had an enema.

Green Arrow returns, and quickly figures out what Ojo's plan is: He'll have the Crumbler crack open the plant's waste tank, so that the radioactive ash will spread across the countryside, killing everything it touches!

At the story's end, Hal and Kari kiss...

#119's, "The Gravity Connection!", was a strange little piece. It had, essentially, two separate plots connected only by Kari Limbo and a bizarre little metal object in her possession.

In Star City, Ollie Queen and Dinah Lance are searching for some "Raging Red Bull Chili Spice", but when they get to the only store in town that sells it, they discover that a certain Mrs. Vorpal has bought the last six bottles. This blows Ollie away, because "a tablespoonful is enough to put a strong man in the hospital!" And so, off go Ollie and Dinah to try to catch up with Mrs. Vorpal. God knows why...

In "another city"—strange name, that—Kari is showing Hal her "private place", her apartment, located above her fortune-teller's shop. "Nobody has ever been here before," she says, "...except my precious lost Guy!"

"You miss him, Kari?"

"Of course! He was my **love** and the gypsy woman does not forget easily!" She says this while caressing Hal's face and kissing him. The gypsy woman also moves pretty fast! This tender moment is interrupted, though, when GL reaches for a pitcher [at least, I **think** it's a pitcher] and a shock knocks him on his ass.

"It reacted with my **power ring**—activated an excess of **psychoplasmic energy**!" It then cracks open to reveal a funny red metal thingie floating inside it.

Oddly enough, when Hal asks Kari what the object is, she replies, "I do not know! It has been in my family for a thousand years!" **Say what**?? In a thousand years, nobody ever won-

dered what this thing was? I can just see Kari, setting up her apartment: "Hmmm, what's this thing? Gee, I don't know. What the hell, I'll just sit it on this table..." Right. When Kari touches the piece of metal, she psychically flashes on several spaceships plunging helplessly toward Saturn. Off to Saturn goes the Lantern.

Cut to Phil's Pharmacy, Star City. A junkie is holding up the place just as Ollie arrives [in costume]. Out of gratitude for stopping the junkie, the pharmacist gives Mrs. Vorpal's address to GA. Seems she bought a pound of rat poison...

Cut to Saturn. The aliens, The Karsh'Klesh ['Names' O'Neil strikes again!], are caught in the gravity of Saturn and some of their own people have taken over. For some reason, these folks are shooting at the people outside the ships. Green Lantern repels their fire [which is odd, 'cause the beams are yellow] and eventually invades the ship. Subduing those inside, GL asks why they're trying to kill their crewmates.

"We are **not**! We are trying to prevent **panic**!"

Hey, that makes sense! Prevent panic by erasing anyone who might do any panicking! Of course!

It turns out that a vital part of the Karsh'Klesh engines is missing. It seems that one of them went to an inhabited planet, taking the part with him. There, he was accidentally killed and the part taken. That was a thousand years ago. See the connection yet? GL tries to pull the ships away from Saturn, but the gravitational pull is just too strong and he fails.

Cut to Earth. Kari has just eaten with Ollie [who appears to have eaten while in costume, including gloves] and Dinah. She shows them the floating red thingie. For some reason, Ollie figures that it'd be better than a parachute and grabs it, saying "Come on, people—we have a life to save!"

Cut to Saturn. The Lantern wants to evacuate the Karsh'Klesh from their ships, but they won't go! One of them shouts that "It is forbidden by ancient tribal law! We may not quit these decks until we again reach our ancestral home a million years from now!"

Well then, pals, you gon' die! Happy?

On Earth: Andy Vorpal eats his chili, yawns, stretches, and falls off the eleventh floor of an unfinished building he's working on. But...Green Arrow leaps after him, grabbing Vorpal's collar with one hand while clutching Kari's object with the other. It lowers them slowly to the ground. How 'bout that, Ga guessed right! Lucky for him. No sooner do they touch ground than GA's explanation [of how Mrs. Vorpal mixed chili spice and rat poison to make her husband stoned enough to take the big fall] is cut off by GL swooping down out of the sky long enough to grab the thingie and rocketing away again.

GL plugs the thing into the Karsh'Klesh engines [Yes, he knows exactly where and how it fits!] and, having saved them, returns to Earth to neck with Kari.

This was almost as good as #91, with GL and GA appearing together in all of three panels [not counting the split splash]. Nothing like a teamup where the stars only meet in passing, right?

Issue #120 and #121 featured the final original villain of 1979: El Espectro! El Espectro was born Jaime Sanchez—sometime during the late 1400s. He came to America in 1513 with Ponce de Leon, in search of the Fountain of Youth. Along with two of his men, he found it, but they crossed him. No sooner had Sanchez drunk from the fountain than one of his men kayoed him with a shovel. Sanchez awoke just in time to find himself being buried alive. Apparently, one sip from the Fountain of Youth grants immortality as well as immunity to thirst, starvation, and suffocation, because Sanchez survives in his coffin for 466 years...until, one fine summer's day in 1979, Hurricane Arachne heaves it out of the ground. When Sanchez climbs out of his box, he scares the bejabbers out of a very un-Hispanic-looking drifter named Juan Pinto, who dubs him "El Espectro" just before running in front of Hal Jordan's truck.

As Green Lantern, Hal saves Pinto from being squashed, stashes him in the back of his truck, and goes to search for El Espectro. El shows up a mile down the road, at a cafe where Ollie Queen is making another fuss about chili and, after stealing Ollie's plate of said chili, demonstrates considerable strength, speed, and sword-wielding capability quite unlike any effects one might expect from a handful of water. GL shows up a little too late to keep Ollie, Dinah, and Kari from getting trounced by El. Kari gets to tell us El's origin [divined from touching his discarded helmet]. Afterwards, the heroes go off to chase El [real gluttons for punishment, aren't they?].

They find El trashing two guys who objected when he took their bottle of booze. When he finishes with the two guys, he proceeds to wipe up the joint with Ollie and Dinah [boy, aren't they useful here?] until GL shows up. The Lantern has some serious problems as he finds his ring ineffective against El's yellow sword, but soon decides it's easier to let the oncoming tidal wave waste the whole waterfront than to come up with a better plan. GL's action after the wave has hit is peculiar: He plucks the Arrow and the Canary from the water—but leaves any other people who might've been in the vicinity. Not even a thought for them, which is highly uncharacteristic of GL. Then, we see that the wave completely annihilated Hal's truck without so much as bruising Juan Pinto, who must have bounced around like a ping-pong ball inside of it. Talk about luck! While everybody in our cast stands around bemoaning the loss of Hal's truck [and his trucking career], El Espectro runs off and steals a tuxedo out of a store window so he can go unnoticed. Really! Unnoticed, with long hair, a beard, a golden sword, and a tux. Right. This, the cast learns from the store owner, after they stop a bunch of looters. He also informs them that El Espectro headed for the airport.

At the airport, El invades an airplane, knocks out the pilot, and forces the passenger to fly the plane. The passenger's name? Carol Ferris! Since Carol's plane is the only one to leave since the storm, GL and GA find it pretty quickly. They enter via a big hole GL bores in the side of the jet. Yup, cuts a hole in the side of a jet. And the amazing thing is, Carol and El don't seem the least bit affected by the sudden depressurization of the cabin. GL and GA almost have El beaten when Carol shows herself. Hal, of course, pauses, distracted. This gives El the opportunity to smash GL into unconsciousness, take the ring, and throw him out of the plane.

Neat trick, considering that El probably shouldn't have known about the ring.

What GA does next probably ranks as one of the most spectacularly improbable stunts I've ever seen. Grabbing the ring, he dives out of the plane, threads the ring on a bolo-arrow, and shoots it unerringly at the wrist of a conveniently-awakened GL [who, by all rights, should have been several miles gone by that time], who retrieves it in time to keep them from splattering all over Florida.

Back on the plane, Carol seems remarkably calm for someone who's just seen her unconscious ex-lover hurled from a plane, with no parachute. El tells her that "These machines that fly—they would be useful against the cursed English!" He orders Carol to take him to Spain, so he can offer the plane to the Queen. But, we are deprived of the sight of King Juan Carlos' Air Force shooting down an amazed El, as the U.S. Navy beats them to it. El is so glad to see the sailors that he guts the rescue 'copter's gas tank and accidentally strikes a spark on the carrier deck, igniting the fuel.

Following yet another fight with the Emerald Masochists, El Espectro is taken into custody and never heard from again.

Hal Jordan is saved from certain financial ruin by a job offer from Carol Ferris, and on the last page, he and Kari decide to get married.

GL #122 & #123 were the final issues for 1979, and also brought an end to the "Green Lantern/Green Arrow" series, #122 being the last to carry that title. Green Arrow made what amounted to a cameo appearance in #122 - #124, before bowing out altogether.

At the beginning of **FL #122**, it's the day of Green Lantern and Kari Limbo's wedding. I **do mean** GL and Kari, **not** Hal and Kari. Hal's getting married in his GL uniform, and the wedding is attended by all his JLA buddies, all in costume. This should blow Hal's secret identity the first time Hal and Kari appear together in public, but I won't go into that. Why is GL in costume? Well, Hal has decided to quit the Green Lantern Corps after his marriage, out of fairness to Kari. That, he says, is why he's wearing the uniform now.

Strange logic, there...

Just as the wedding is about to begin, Kari goes into one of her danger-sensing trances and traces a Phantom Zone projector in the dirt. Superman flies off to the Fortress of Solitude to test the projector. A green beam lashes out, pulling him into the Zone [which, by the way, is miscolored red all through both issues].

Just as Kari is supposed to say "I do", she has another vision, mumbles, "...power ring...Superman...it's so dark...nothing to touch...to feel..." and faints. GL flies off to see if Superman's in trouble. Fortunately, Hal doesn't get to hear Kari whisper "Guy...my beloved Guy..." as she flashes on his death [—"an event she did not witness, yet which she... knows—"].

After neatly plucking the projector from the Fortress, Hal enters the Zone and is promptly attacked by a power-beam straitjacket and bat-

tleax. "I'm afraid I'm about to have my worst fears confirmed!" GL thinks. "I'm under attack [obviously!]...the kind of attack only Sinestro or another Green Lantern could mount! And Sinestro isn't here!" Also, Sinestro's power-beams aren't green like these.

Hal nets his attacker, who is revealed as a live Guy Gardner, who isn't too thrilled to see Hal, though. "I will soon see you dead!" he snarls. Out of the mists step General Zod and two other villains, who hold an unconscious Superman between them. Zod quickly demonstrates that he and the other villains have learned to focus their combined wills through Guy's ring, making it more powerful than Hal's. Besides being under the Zone villains' mental control, Guy is insanely jealous of Hal's relationship with Kari. And "for that," Guy cries, "I'll rip you apart!"

Guy very nearly defeats Hal [no small feat, considering Guy's near-total lack of experience] and is about to deliver the coup-de-grace when Superman comes to and [literally] kicks Guy and Zod's butts! With Guy momentarily distracted, Hal takes the opportunity to grab Superman and haul him out of the Zone.

Returning to Kari, Hal gives her the happy news of Guy's survival. Everybody should be happy now, right? Wrong. Not only is Guy still trapped in the Zone, but Kari says that while Guy lives, she can't marry Hal...because if she did, it wouldn't be fair "—to anyone!"

So much for **that** relationship.

Returning to the Zone, GL uses anti-kryptonite to disable the villains and, while they're weakened and fleeing, grabs Guy. Just as he's about to pull Guy out of the Zone, a yellow beam grabs Guy and wrenches him from Hal's grasp. Of course, there's only **one** GL villain who uses a yellow beam, right? Of course! It's everybody's favorite ring-slinging malcontent, Sinestro!

Hal goes to Qward [I'm not quite sure how Hal figures that Sinestro's on Qward. If he's in another universe, he could be in any one of a number of parallel universes, couldn't he?], where he's greeted by a seemingly-recovered Guy. Seemingly-recovered, is he? That makes Hal a little suspicious. He bathes Guy in "psychoplasmic light" and "As I feared! My green light shows a yellow beam extending to Guy from behind that chunk of rock!" [Funny, the beam looks green to me...] Yes, Sinestro's controlling Guy. This discovered, the two enemies start to fight. Sinestro doesn't want to fight fair, after all, it's much more fun to cheat. He rings up a globe around Guy. The globe immediately begins to shrink. Sinestro has an offer. He'll release Guy the moment Hal surrenders his ring.

[Some choice, huh?]

While making certain that Guy isn't already dead, Hal suddenly realizes that there's air, despite the fact that they're in space. Instantly, he devises a plan. Hal blasts a bunch of planetoids to dust, which he then blows at Sinestro with a ringed-up fan. While Sinestro's blinded and distracted, Hal beats the stuffing out of him and whisks Guy back to Earth.

At the hospital on Earth, Guy sits in a wheelchair and stares blankly off into space, silent and unmoving. Kari, of course, will stay with him until he recovers...**if** he recovers, which is unlikely.

Poor Guy. What a career he had! He first appeared in **Green Lantern #59** [1968] and disappeared until #87 [1971], at which time he was hit by a bus, landing him in the hospital [and giving John Stewart a shot at the ring]. He was forgotten for eight years, brought back, killed, resurrected, and made into a vegetable.

Isn't it great to be a super-hero?

Hal swears he'll find Sinestro...

All things considered, this last two-parter was probably the best story of the year. Not only did it eschew any weird new villains with strange speech patterns, it brought back one of GL's most durable foes and proved that the Phantom Zone villains can work with someone who's not from Krypton. In truth, it left me a lot more satisfied than any of the other stories of the year. It was a **good story**, pure and simple. And that, after all, is what we want most from our comics.

NEXT: Sinestro! Power War! Carol warms up to Hal! Star Sapphire and more!

YES... YES! I'M THE CRUMBLER
I WAS WONDERING WHAT YOU CALL YOURSELF!
"AND I ONLY DID WHAT I HAD TO DO!"
I USED THE FUND FOR THE PROJECT TO DEVELOP THIS-- A DEVICE THAT'S LOCKED INTO MY NERVOUS SYSTEM!
WITH IT, I CAN CANCEL THE FORCE THAT BINDS ATOMS TOGETHER!

"FOUR-COLOR WORDS": Worlds Enough and Time

(Part One)
by Murray R. Ward

Our topic for discussion this month has been bandied about by comics fans and pros alike for two decades, and only now is an official "party line" being formulated at either of the major comics companies. I speak of the question of the passage of time in comics stories involving continuing characters vis-a-vis the passage of time in the "real" world of the comics readers.

Just a few years ago, after allowing most fans to assume that their characters were aging on an at least roughly one-to-one basis with their readers, Marvel Comics decided that this was becoming an unbelievable hypothesis, inasmuch as the company was nearing its 20th anniversary [counting from the first issue of **Fantastic Four**]. Besides the multiple celebration of such fixed annual holidays as Christmas and Halloween [the latter in the series of "Rutland, Vermont" stories guest-starring Tom Fagan], there were two factors contributing to the credibility gap between Marvel-time and real-time: collegiate life and World War II. Those long-time Marvel heroes who were students in their alter egos, notably Spider-Man and to a lesser extent, the Human Torch and the original X-Men, tended to foul up the temporal continuity by remaining students well past what would, given a one-to-one time ratio with the world of their creators, have been the characters' respective 30th birthdays. The older heroes, meanwhile, had during their '60s origins been linked inextricably to the historical event of the Second World War, an event which unarguably took place during the early 1940s on virtually every "alternate Earth" on which super-hero adventures occurred, just as it had on our own world. For these characters to have been adults at the time of that conflict and to have aged naturally since resulted in the inescapable conclusion that such heroes as Mr. Fantastic, the Thing, and Nick Fury, must now be a bit long in the tooth for their accustomed athletics and derring-do.

Therefore, Marvel's editors took it upon themselves to explain, in letters pages ranging from **X-Men** to **Marvel Two-In-One**, that an unspecified length of time **much less than twenty years** had gone by since **FF #1** even though the characters had in many cases fought in WW II and/or entered college in the mid-1960s. On some levels and some series, this "time compacting" process works fairly well. In the **X-Men**, for example, roughly two years can be said to have passed from **X-Men #1** in which the team's youngest member, Iceman, is 16, till **#32**, in which Bobby Drake celebrates his 18th birthday. Another two years then suffices to encompass the rapid-fire events of the remainder of the original run of the series. The time between the cancellation of the book at **#66** and its revival with **#94** [during which time several X-Men made guest-appearances in other comics and the solo Beast series took place] can be shortened to as little as a single year, and the adventures of the new team can be fit into perhaps another two years under this theory. The career of the X-Men totals about seven years and even the longest-standing member, Cyclops, need be no older than his middle twenties [which in turn makes the duration of his extremely drawn-out romance with Marvel Girl seem much more believable].

However, there are two problems with this theory. First, since the Marvel Universe is such a tightly interwoven skein, if one hero's career is compacted in time, so too must the careers of all of his fellow heroes and villains and supporting characters from other series with whom he more than occasionally comes into contact. Immediately upon reading of this new idea of temporal "skrunching", Marvel indexer George Olshevsky and I exchanged letters with each other and with Marvel. He suggested that given the redistribution of events in the Marvel Universe over the past two decades to fit into approximately a third of that time, on Marvel-Earth the Presidents of the United States are elected for terms of a single year apiece, rather than four [I will leave it to the reader to ponder the consequences of this on say, Steve Egglehart's political corruption stories in **Captain America** and **Avengers**], and Galactus must return to attempt to eat the Earth on an annual basis [no wonder the man in the street on Marvel-Earth is trauma-ridden]. The only solution that even begins to deal with this conundrum is the relegation of all "contemporary references" in a story [such as the appearance or naming of the President] to the status of writers' devices to increase the immediacy of the tale in the readers' minds. In other words, these appearances need not be taken as gospel in terms of real-world personalities.

The second problem with time-compacting is that if we assume, for instance, that all of the events chronicled in **X-Men** take place over seven years rather than the twenty years it took for the comics to be produced, we are left with the question: "**Which** seven years?" Did the X-Men begin in 1963 when their first issue was published and have we now only reached the point of chronicling their adventures that took place in 1970? Or did the team first get together seven years ago counting backwards from a transient "now"—that is, in 1975, at this writing? And if we continue to compact time, will Marvel get further and

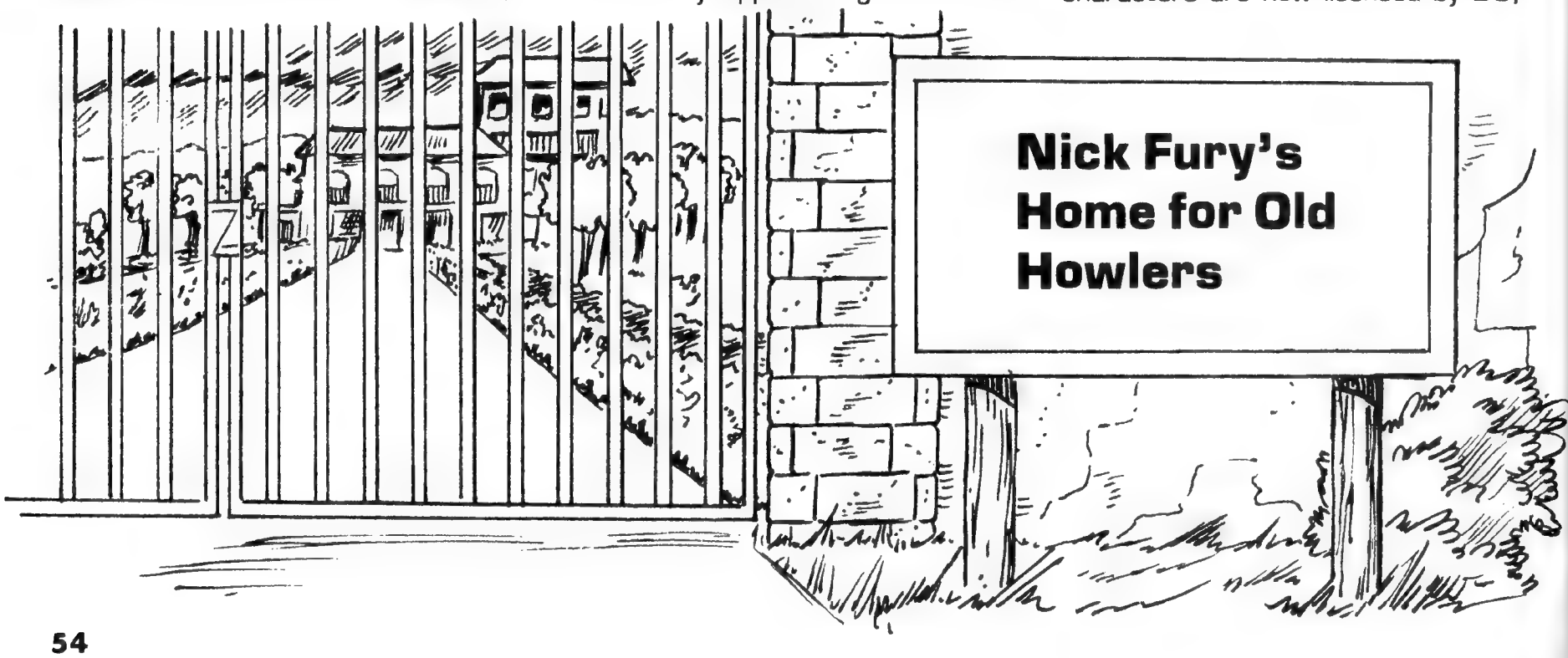
birthday, dating from his age in the Sax Rohmer novels. The antidote to a Dkrull aging ray left Reed Richards, Ben Grimm, and Sue Storm Richards younger and more powerful than they had been before being affected by the geriatric device [now if only the editors had realized that Johnny Storm could also have used a dose of de-aging at that point]. And such Golden Age stalwarts as the Sub-Mariner and Captain America have their own answers to the crisis: Namor's hybrid metabolism keeps him decades younger than his 1940's counterparts, such as ex-girlfriend Betty Dean; and Cap not only gained twenty years by being frozen in suspended animation, but a side-effect of the Super-Soldier Serum that created him also retards his aging process.

Still and all, some solution, be it time-compacting or whatever, is necessary if the original Marvel characters are to continue. Ben Grimm's monstrous identity as the Thing keeps it from being too obvious that he is dating a woman, Alicia Masters, who must be almost twenty years his junior, but sooner or later, Hugh Hefner will shuffle off this mortal coil, leaving Tony Stark as the universe's oldest "playboy".

Given the above-outlined dilemma, it is perhaps fortunate for yours truly that I am at most a consultant to its eventual resolution. The ultimate "say" in the matter of Marvel Comics history goes to Jim Shooter, Stan Lee, and the Marvel staff, and to a far lesser extent to George Olshevsky further behind in telling their stories, since it will take them [assuming a consistent ratio of time-compacting, which has not as yet been established] three years to tell each one year's worth of stories or will the date of origin of the various characters come [in the words of Kurt Vonnegut's protagonist Billy Pilgrim in **Slaughterhouse-Five**] "unstuck in time" and move forward so as to stay the designated number of years before the ever-changing "present"?

Some Marvel characters have been offered an "out" from their aging problems within the context of certain stories. Peter Parker must certainly have spent more than the usual number of years in college, given his physical inability to take a full slate of courses while working part-time as a photographer and adventuring as Spider-Man at the same time. His spotty attendance and recurrent tardiness must have caused the formerly straight-A science major to flunk not a few courses outright. Nick Fury has been revealed, in a Howie Chaykin story in **Marvel Spotlight**, to be in possession of a formula not unlike Fu Manchu's elixir vitae immortality serum, which keeps him eternally youthful [but which does not, of course, explain the still-active Howling-Commandos-turned-SHIELD-agents, Dum Dum Dugan and Gabe Jones]. Speaking of the Devil Doctor, his adversary Sir Denis Nayland Smith of **Master of Kung Fu** must have taken the opportunity to sip some of the fabled elixir of youth as well, as he is currently approaching his 100th and his self-appointed "staff", of which I am but one. An almost identical problem which I have a somewhat larger share in attempting to solve, however, is that of the DC Comics continuity. This enigma is currently being tackled on two fronts: DC itself intends to publish a multi-part "history" series which will henceforth be the "Bible" of their super-hero multiverse, written by Len Wein and Marv Wolfman and researched by Peter Sanderson; and your humble author has become George Olshevsky's DC counterpart by attempting to assemble the **DC Comics Index** [with a little...make that a lot...of help from my friends]. After conversations with Mr. Sanderson at last summer's conventions, I can see where we may not ultimately agree on every facet of DC history, nor are Len and Marv bound to act on Peter's every suggestion, however well-intentioned or intelligent. Be that as it may, I offer for the consideration of my readers some of my thoughts on the problem of reconstituting the DC time-line thus far.

In the DC Universe, we have the mixed blessing and curse of the multiple-Earths syndrome with which to deal, unlike at Marvel, where all but the occasional story labelled as such [including the entire **What If**? series] takes place on the self-same Marvel-Earth. Disregarding for the moment those alternate realities where the super-heroes of no longer-extant comic book companies, whose characters are now licensed by DC,



hold forth, such as the Earth-S-for-Shazam of the original Captain Marvel and the Fawcett stars, and the Earth-X of the Quality Comics characters, not to mention the recently-revealed Earth-C of Captain Carrot and crew and the DC funny-animals, our major task of explanation is a two-fold one. First, as at Marvel, we must explain the seeming failure to normally age the current crop of super-characters. Second, we must relegate said characters, and those of DC's past, to one of the two major parallel Earths, Earth-1 or Earth-2. Earth-1, simply put, encompasses the heroes of the present-day Justice League of America and their known affiliates and contemporaries; Earth-2 is the abode of the 1940s DC characters, including the Justice Society, many of whom have counterparts in the League. Some characters obviously exist in only one world, others in both, and others may or may not exist in both, based on internal evidence in their published stories. The twin prongs of the DC historian's dilemma are interrelated, and as often as one [the use of Earth-2 as a place to which to relegate the too-early adventures of a seemingly ageless hero, for instance] helps to solve the other, so does one [the inability of certain early stories to take place on Earth-2 because of their relation to JLA rather than JSA adventures, say] serve to complicate the other.

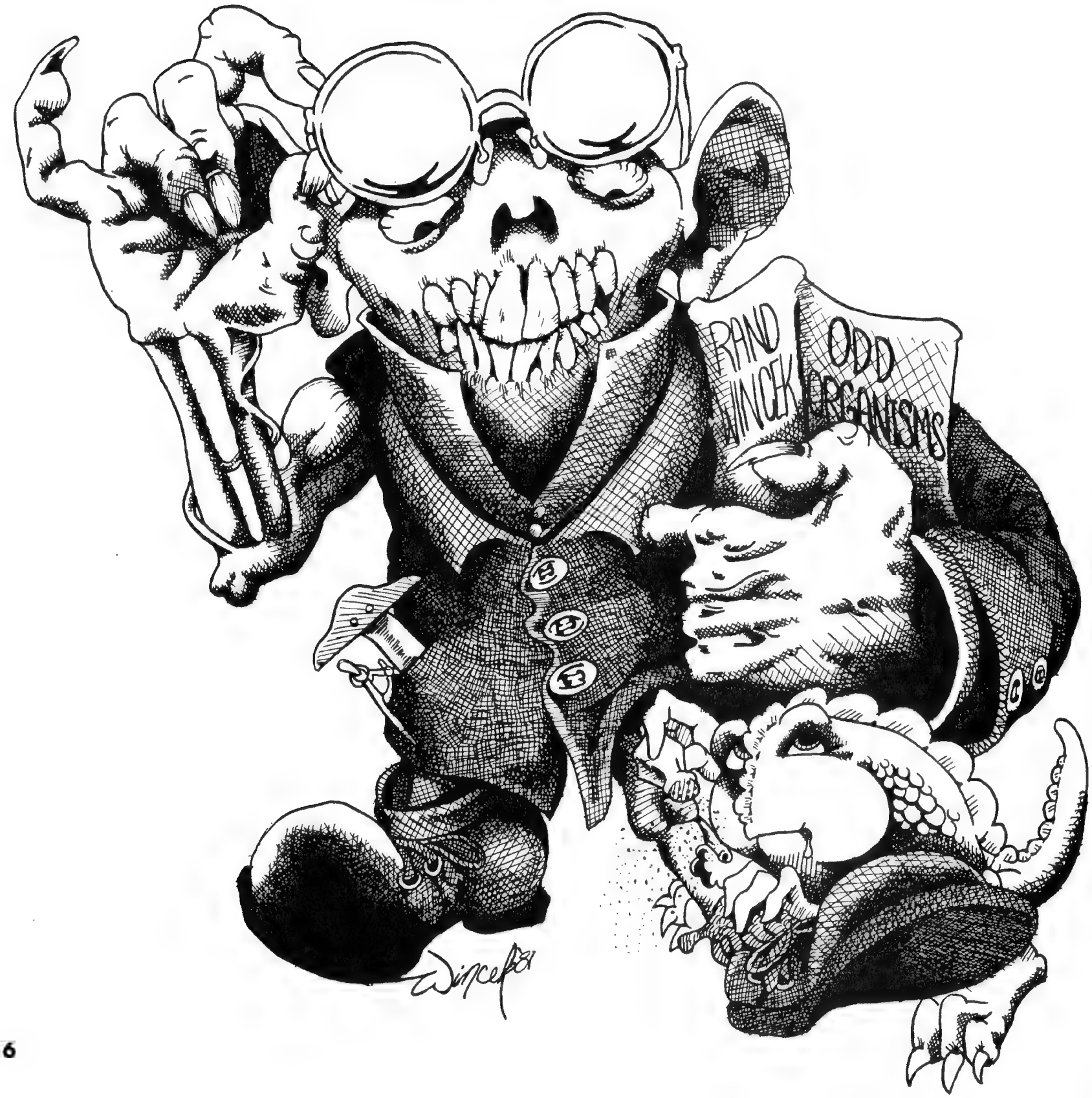
There are basically three generations of superheroes in the DC Universe whose ages [relative to those of their readers and to each other] must be established. The first generation is that of the 1940s heroes, most of whom belong to the Justice Society and are situated on Earth-2, with, as we shall see, a few notable exceptions. The second consists of the adult Justice League members and their peers, whose origins were first recounted, for the most part, in the 1960s, and who are some years younger [but **how much** younger?] than the JSA All-Stars. The third generation is that of the younger heroes of Earth-1, including Supergirl and the members of both teams of Teen Titans, past and present. Establishing a separate set of rules to govern the aging of each group rapidly becomes as unsatisfactory as the arbitrary assignation of a time-compacted scale to isolated bits and pieces of the Marvel Universe. If it is possible, though perhaps undesirable, to establish the JSA stalwarts as aging at a different rate than the JLA heroes whom they annually team with, it is impossible to set up a similar dichotomy between the JLA and the Titans, both of whom exist in the same world.

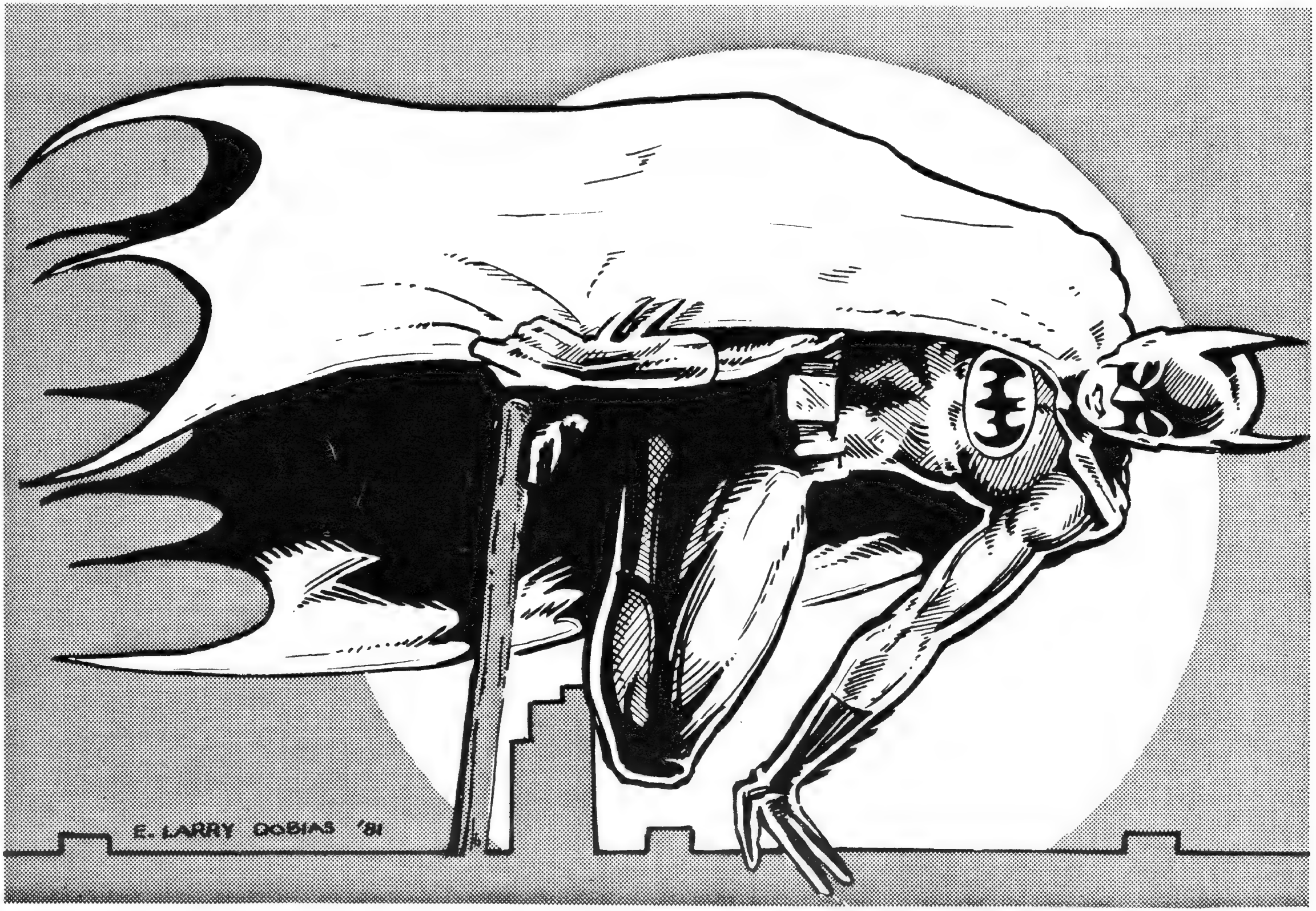
Some prominent writers on comics continuity both in prodom and fandom favor the establishment of a third alternate Earth to which to relegate all stories which violate the established Earth-1/Earth-2 ethic. Some would call for a "middle-era" Earth, or Earth-E [named for E. Nelson Bridwell, the DC writer who has written the most stories dealing with the era between the Golden and Silver Ages of Comics proper], on which a Superman and Batman who belong to neither JSA nor JLA cavort. Others would throw all of the [to them] non-canonical tales in which Batman meets heroes of other times and epochs into an Earth-B [named for Murray **B**oltinoff, **B**of Haney, and **The Brave and the Bold**, wherein most of the offending stories were published]. Granted, at least one such recurring alternate world must be created, to deal with the recent proliferation of DC/Marvel crossovers, in which such characters as Superman and Spider-Man, Batman and the Hulk, and the Teen Titans and the X-Men meet each other without recourse to inter-dimensional travel. On this as-yet-unnamed Earth, all of the DC superheroes and all of the Marvel characters co-exist, along with all of their various villains and supporting casts [Bridwell, it should be noted, is also a believer in this particular milieu, in which not only Earth, having double the number of super-beings, but also the rest of the universe, being governed by Marvel's various pantheons of deities **and** by Green Lantern's Guardians, is hopelessly overcrowded]. But beyond this single self-contained world [which no Marvel or DC hero should ever be allowed to visit], your author would propose the creation of as few alternate existences of the mainstream variety as possible in order to explain the past and chart a course for the future of DC's heroes. Rather, as many stories as possible should be assigned to the universes of Earth-1 or Earth-2 before being shuffled off to some as-yet-uncharted realm, or worse yet, being declared retroactively non-canonical.

In my next column, I will attempt to explain my **own** theory of who-did-what-when-and-with-whom, which shall be the basis for "reality" in my forthcoming indexes, and which will attempt to strike a happy medium between the use of Occam's razor and throwing out the baby with the bath water.

Art

This section will present the artwork of you, the CFF reader. FANDOM SHOWCASE will publish the artwork and the fiction submitted to us. These sections will appear every month. We look forward to seeing your work appear on our pages. Please carefully mark your work with your name, address and phone number and if you wish its return please include a SASE.




E. LARRY DOBIAS '81

DOBIAS '82

?
Keith
©8c

KIETH,82

EH..? THAT SHADOW ON THE WATER... WHAT--?
GOOD GOD!
MIKE SUTTON '82

Grahame Wood

KATHOLICITY

NAME YOUR SUPERHERO

By Kathleen Glancy

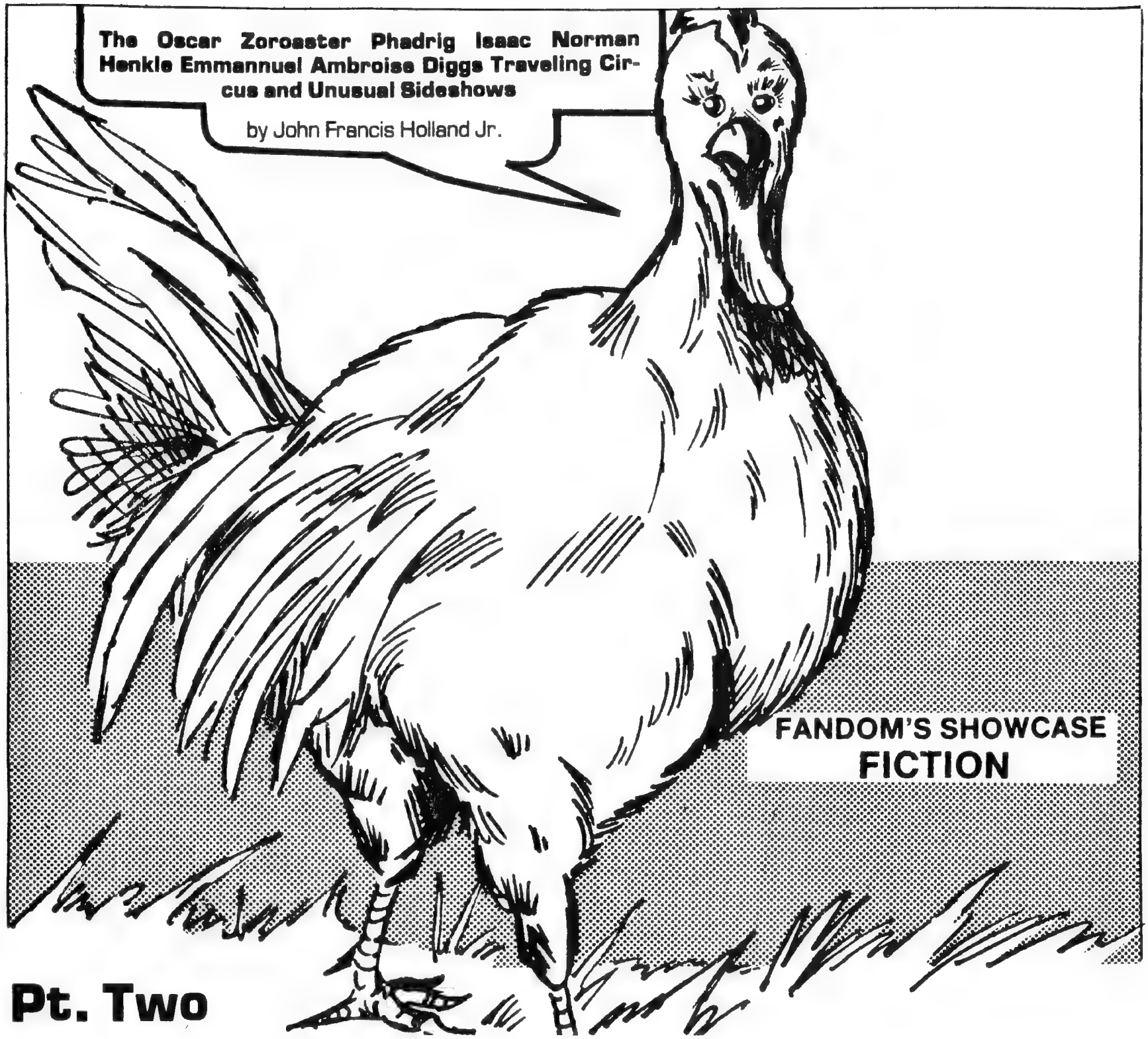
The other day I picked up a second-hand copy of a book called **Name Your Baby**—no, I **don't** actually need it, it was only that it was such a bargain and the subject does interest me—which gives the meanings of about a thousand names. As I read it, I began to wonder if a writer about to create a new character ever deliberately chooses a name with an appropriate meaning. So I looked up some well-known names from comics—and came to the conclusion that some are very appropriate, and others...Well, Conan means "intelligent". Need I say more?

Beginning with the Senior Superhero—Kal-El, we have been told, means "star-child". And Clark means the obvious "one who can write". Pretty appropriate. But Lois means "famous in war", whereas she is mainly famous for being accident-prone. And Lex, of all things, means "law". Bruce, of course, was originally a surname—that of Robert The [you'd be surprised how many tourists think "The" was actually his middle name] Bruce, a man more associated with spiders than bats—although there might well have been bats in his cave as well. Bats also hang about in belfries—so Kirk ["of the church"] Langstrom's name is pretty apposite. But poor old Batgirl is "a foreigner", and the Huntress was hardly called by an appropriate name—Helena means "light". Her mother Selina, "of the moon", was better. Alfred means "elf-counsel", which seems a bit odd for a butler. And Richard "rule-hard" Grayson is going to have a tough time if he tries to live up to his name in the new Teen Titans, where the females have all the real powers.

Adam means "Earth"—pretty ironic when you consider Mr. Strange. While Flash seems to have got Green Arrow's name by mistake—Barry means "marksman". And Oliver, which derives from "olive-tree" and so from the traditional symbol of peace, is not very appropriate for GA. Neither is Ralph ["counsel-wolf"] for the Elongated Man—and Aquaman's name is positively weird—Arthur means "bear-hero". If Green Lantern is a Harold ["army-power"] his name is apt too, but if he is a Henry ["home-ruler"] not so much so. Ronald ["power-force"] and Diana ["divine"] are pretty good too. The Marvel Family are very well-named on the male side—William means "protector" and Frederick "peace-rule". But Mary means "bitter". It's maybe easier with alien-type names, because these are generally pretty neat. Mera could certainly derive from the French word for "sea", and Kara from the Greek "kore"—"maiden". And Alanna means "darling" in Irish—and probably in Rannian too.

Over at Marvel, the incongruities seem to predominate over the aptnesses. I mentioned Conan; his lady-friend's name, Sonja, means "wisdom". And look at the FF—Reed has nothing to do with bulrushes, it means "red". If you bear that in mind while reading an uncensored version of the origin story, it makes it pretty silly. Benjamin means "son of the right hand", which is pretty incongruous applied to **any** man, much less a Thing. Susan means "a lily", and John "Grace of God". [The masculine and feminine derivatives of this name apply to many characters, including the Wasp and Shanna the She-Devil.] Peter means "a rock" and does not have much relevance to the neurotic Spider-Man, the paranoid Quicksilver or even much to the metallic Colossus. Anthony ["priceless, praiseworthy"] and Donald ["world-ruler"] aren't bad. Stephen, however, means "a wreath". I suppose if you think of it as a **laurel** wreath it could be worse. Spider-woman's name is very ominous. "God is looking", it warns sternly. Power Man's monicker means "light", and Iron Fists's "judge" [Hey, does that mean a certain resident of Mega-City One should actually be called Daniel Dredd, not Joe?]. Daredevil, would you believe, is a "gift of God". God can have the male chauvinist, no—******idiot back from me.

The Hulk Family has some really silly names—Robert means "fame-bright", Bruce could be deemed to mean "a particularly heroic king", and cousin Jennifer means "fair and yielding". Even the TV version is silly—David means "beloved". I hesitated over who has the daftest name in Marveldom—the Hellcat [Patricia—"an aristocrat"] and Ka-Zar [Kevin—"gentle"] were strong contenders—but the winner has to be J. J. Jameson. Jonah means "dove".


The Oscar Zoroaster Phadrig Isaac Norman Henkle Emmannuel Ambroise Diggs Traveling Circus and Unusual Sideshows
by John Francis Holland Jr.
FANDOM'S SHOWCASE
FICTION

Pt. Two

Before I could agree or disagree they were gone. As they rounded the wagon, just before they vanished from my line of sight, Leviticus turned and gave me a wink. I smiled.

"Well, you know my name, but I'm in the dark about yours."

I turned, it was the cat. "Call me Phil."

"Fine," said the cat. "Follow me, and I'll show you around a bit."

So I did. The first place that Eureka lead me was to the wagon of the pumpkinhead. The wagon was small, no more than a child's toy, unlike Oscar's which was the covered type used in western shows. Eureka jumped up to the seat, and waited for me to join her. I declined, I prefered to keep my feet on the ground for now. I already felt like I was floating as I moved through this dream like reality. My perceptions on reality were stretched to the limit, and if my feet left the ground I might just float away.

The only one present besides the cat and myself was the saw horse. Eureka asked it, "How are you doing, saw horse?"

"Fine," grumbled the wooden animal. "If I was unhitched I would be even finer. But alas there is no one to unhitch me." The last was said with an eye in my direction.

I thought of pretending not to understand what the saw horse meant, but decided that such a thing would be mean, and so far I had been treated only with kindness by the circus. "I can undo your harness if you like." I undid the harness while Eureka licked her face.

As soon as I had untied the last string, for the harness was only tied to the saw horse, the saw horse pranced off. Without so much as a thank you.

"The saw horse is like that. He don't cotton to manners very much." Eureka had finished her cleaning, and sat on the seat watching me. "I guess it has to do with her upbringing. He didn't have none."

"My name is Phil, and I think you are beautiful."

Eureka let out a howl of cat laughter. "The gentleman certainly is straightforward."

"Hush, Eureka." The first words that I was to hear her utter. Her voice was that of a musical instrument, tuned to a quality no human can ever manage. My own voice felt so shallow after hearing hers.

"I think that I am in love with you Poly. If I may call you Poly."

"Her voice was that of a musical instrument, tuned to a quality no human can ever manage."

She was no longer blushing. With one fluid motion she sat down on the wagon's step, and regarded me from eyes that never seemed to settle on one color. "Yes you may call me Poly. And your other words are pretty bold for a stranger. You do not even know me. If you are in love with me only for my looks then our relationship would be very brief."

"No, no. I can't explain it, but your looks are only secondary. When I saw you I felt that I had known you for all of my life. There's a feeling of life surrounding you." I finished with a sigh. We both sat and stood there looking each other over. My mind was already made up on the matter of her, but she was still forming an opinion of me. Eureka yawned, and we suddenly realized that we were not alone. A slight blush began to color her cheeks again. I moved to the side of the wagon, and offered my arm.

"Would you care to take a stroll with me by the lakeside, my dear."

She rose. "I might at that." With a glance at Eureka. "If anyone looks for me tell them where I went. And that I'll be back in a little while."

She took my arm, and we moved away from the wagons and the forming camp. I felt like the king of the world with Poly on my arm, and suddenly I discovered that I was blushing. Poly turned to look, and laughed.

"So it seems that I am not the only one so cursed."

I felt like shrinking away, but then asked myself why. I laughed. "No, I'm afraid that we are parcel to the same sickness."

We continued in silence. Within a few minutes we were about two hundred yards from the circus camp, and we stood only a few feet from the water of the lake. Poly was fascinated by the water. Her gaze traveled over the surface to the other side, and I wondered if she would even miss me if I was not by her side. Several times I started to speak, but whenever I looked over at her intent watch on the lake, the words would die in my throat.

"Phil, you are a nice man." Poly's voice was music to my tone deaf ears.

"And you dear Poly are beautiful."

"Please," there was a hint of misery in her voice and I could not bear that, "Don't say such things. You do not even know me."

"I know all I will ever need to know." Poly grew quiet, and her face reflected a hurt she did not wish to deliver. She left the confines of my presence, and wandered down to the very edge of the water. She bent down, sitting on her knees, and played in the water. She traced an outline of nothing, but never let it bother her.

Watching her I realized that I did not need to find an answer to my life. The answer sat before me with her finger in the water. My past life was meaningless, my money not worth my time, compared to her. It was as if she had put a spell on me, and for all I knew she might have. But I didn't care. If this love was artificial, I did not need the real thing. I was completely captured by Polychrome.

With her back to me, and her finger still in the water, Poly spoke. "No, Phil, you do not love me. You love what I represent, the ideal woman in your mind. If you knew the truth, you could not love me. And I will not let myself love you."

I started forward, but found my feet had forgotten how to work. "But Poly..." I began and ended somewhat lamely. Another try. "I don't understand you, and I don't care. I love you Poly, and I want to be with you always. We can stay here, or I can travel with you and the circus. All I know is that 'I will not lose you."

As I was finishing up what I thought was a pretty good speech, Poly turned towards me with a tear stained face and uttering a single cry she jumped to her feet and ran away from me. Ran away from me! I stood there and watched her flee back to her camp, and I wanted to follow. I really did. But my damn feet still did not understand what it meant when I yelled at them to walk. Just as Poly entered the camp my feet remembered. I nearly fell down in my excitement to catch up with her. I started out after her when I heard a sharp cry bid me to stop.

"Phil! Wait a second." I stopped, though my heart told me to forget the voice and keep going, I stopped. As I stood there and waited for whoever had called out to me, I noticed that the birds were no longer singing. I was watching person level when I should have been watching chicken level. Thus Bill was able to sneak up on me again. When she spoke I nearly jumped out of my skin. As soon as my heart had ceased to act like a runaway freight train, I realized who it was.

"But I didn't care. If this love was artificial, I did not need the real thing."

"What do you want Bill? I'm sorry if I seem a little abrupt, but I'm in kind of a hurry."

Bill craned her neck back as far as it could go to meet me in the eyes. "Yeah so I noticed. I thought you had bad manners before, but I did not think they were bad enough to send a girl racing off in tears."

"Look," I had clenched my fists and my words came out slowly and painfully, "what just happened is between me and Poly. And none of your damned business."

Bill lowered her head. "Yeah, I know. That line was out of line, I'm sorry."

Just then the pumpkinhead and the little girl that he had called his father came from behind the wagon. "And stop calling me your father." The little girl's voice was high pitched, very close to what I would call a screech.

The pumpkinhead bowed his head, and said in a whisper. "Yes, father."

The girl stamped her foot on the ground, muttered an "oh!", but she smiled through it all. Their conversation ceased when they saw me, and the three of us stood silently apart. Eureka was the first to speak. "This is Phil. Phil, these two that have forgotten how to speak are the Princess and Jack. You can figure out which is which by yourself."

The princess blushed. "Forgive me. I forget my duty. Welcome Phil."

"Thank you, princess." She offered me her tiny hand to shake, so I did. Jack held out a hand made from wood, and I shook it too, without even getting a splinter.

"Where do you come from Phil?" Jack asked.

"From the cabin you see over there. I live here." Jack's constant grin was infectious. I found that I was grinning again, and could do nothing to stop it. I had better be careful, I reasoned, or before long I might even be laughing, and that could only lead to being happy.

The princess noticed my smile, and wondered "What is so funny, Phil? You look like the cat that swallowed the bird. Excuse me Eureka."

"Nothing." I turned my head to hide my smile, but only saw Jack's grin again. My grin widened. I now saw that the princess was smiling. Before long the three of us were laughing out loud, leaving Eureka very confused.

"Come along Phil, before you go completely crazy." The cat jumped down from her seat, and started off without me. She assumed that I would follow her, and I did, but not before I had one last chuckle with the princess and Jack Pumpkinhead. As I moved out of earshot I heard Jack ask the princess, "What was so funny, father?"

"I'll never understand people, and I don't think that I ever want to." Eureka lead me past a wagon with the inscription "SEE the invisible people from the valley of VOE!" That was worth more than a chuckle, much to Eureka's displeasure.

Eureka lead me through the forming camp. We passed wagons that claimed all types of miracles, and I would stop to read them all. The Braided Man, the wooden gargoyles, real live dragons, the Prince of the Mangaboos, the Musicker—the Human Organ, King Dox of the Foxes, the Highly Magnified Woggle Bug, the winged monkeys, Tiktok the machine man, the wheelers, and more. So much more! This circus was incredible. The acts were so different from what one normally sees in a circus. One wagon we passed had a lion pulling it, and another a tiger. Both were unharnessed now, and laying about in the grass.

We continued on until we came to a wagon that read "SEE the eighth wonder of the world—the daughter of the rainbow!" and below that was "Polychrome the rainbow!" I stopped to stare. Eureka had at first passed the wagon up, turned around and came back to join me. "Kinda gets you, don't it? The advertising is all the Boss' doing. He thinks he has a way with words. Me, I'm too kind hearted to tell him what type of way he has with words."

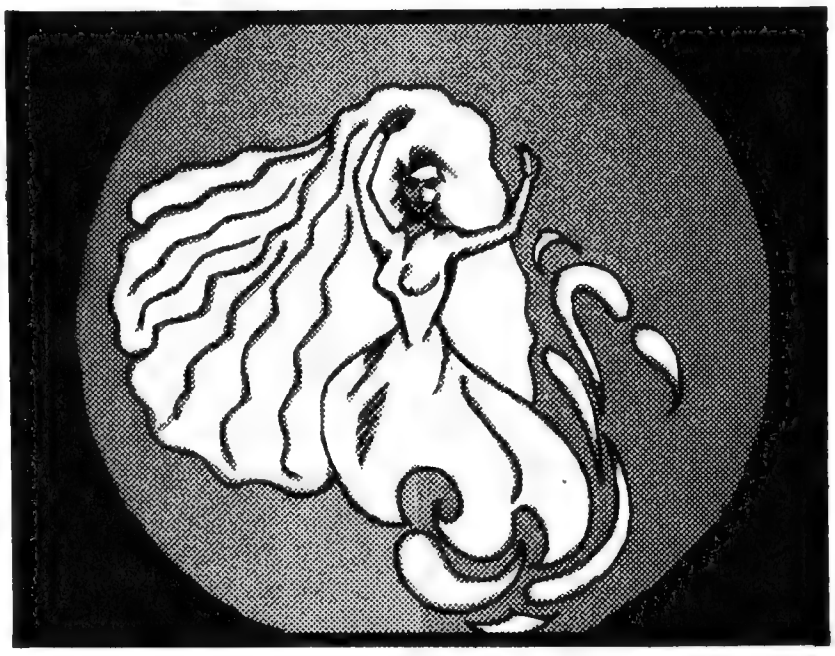
I did not say that it was just like all circus blurbs, nothing merely stated but everything exclaimed. Yet, and yet it was not like any other circus. A normal circus would be claiming the best lion tamer in the world, the most astonishing trapeze act ever, but the Oscar Diggs circus claimed nothing of the sort. It advertised woggle bugs, live dragons, invisible people, and the daughter of the rainbow. The more that I saw of this circus the more that I liked it.

Eureka started to say something but was cut short when the door to the rainbow's daughter wagon opened. And Polychrome exited into the light of the day. When my eyes caught sight of her my heart skipped a beat. All fancy words aside, Poly was beautiful. She was as radiant as the sun that created her father. Her dress was made of woven cobwebs colored in bright strips of the rainbow that mingled together to create a sight that was most pleasing to the eye. Her hair was free and unbound, and reminded me of a cloud of gold, if such an object is possible. Her face was—but how do you describe sight to a man that has been blind all his life? There is no way that I could describe the beauty found within her face.

She errupted from the wagon with a high jump, and upon touching the ground she immediately launched herself into a dance of joy. I am not a man that normally enjoys dancing, but Poly expressed a joy of life in her dance. Her lithe feet rarely touched the ground. Watching her I felt more alive than I have ever felt. There is no other way to describe it, to see Poly dance is to live.

Her dance was beautiful, and when it ended I felt tears running down my face. I wanted to cry out for her to continue. Even Eureka seemed to be affected.

"Bravo! That was beautiful." I clapped. Poly turned, she had not realized that she had been observed. A slight reddening of her cheeks showed her to be blushing in embarrassment. I felt the villain for causing even the slightest discomfort to such an awesome creature. It was then that I realized that I was in love. Love at first sight, but I knew that my life would never be complete without Poly.



I said nothing. I stood there mad as hell, and wanting to hit something. But Bill was the only candidate, and I was not so far gone as to do that.

"Hey, Phil, why don't you take a load off your feet." I turned to stare at the camp. "Like they always say in situations like this 'give her time to think it over'. She's not going anywhere, so how about a man-to-chicken talk."

With one last look towards where Poly had disappeared I sat. My hand brushed away some bug in my eye, and I waited for Bill to speak. I surely did not feel like talking.

"Before I say anymore, I want to tell you that I am sorry. I am more sorry than you will ever realize, Phil." Bill seemed to come to a dead end. She could go no farther, and I was more mystified than ever. What was going on here?

"But I have to tell you this anyway Phil. What Poly said is true. As far as you are concerned she is the ideal woman. That's why you fell for her with just one look."

I could keep quiet no longer. "Isn't that the height of conceit to think of herself as the ideal woman. Even if I do love her, that doesn't make her perfect."

"No," I imagined Bill to hold up a silencing hand, "I didn't say she was THE ideal woman. I said she was YOUR ideal woman."

"But, but, that..." was all I could manage.

"Yes it does. We are creatures of your imagination, sparked to life by the memory of a children's series."

"Then you're not real?" It was more a question than a statement. They had to be real, I was sitting here talking to one of them. If they were not real, than I was ready for the men in white.

"Of course we're real. I said we were created from your imagination, I did not say we lived there. Let me explain it this way. When this is all over, and we're long gone, do me a favor. Go to the library and find a story called "Opium" by a man named Ellison. The world described in that story is the way the world could really be. So in fact it was wrong of me to say that we are creations of your imagination. Actually we are creations of a writer that lived over eighty years ago. But your depression has brought us to your sight."

I sat there and tried to comprehend all of what I had just been told. I could not, my mind could make a futile grasp at what Bill had said, but that was all. They were real, but they were not! I was afraid that I was on my way to a meeting with the men with the butterfly nets.

Our silence was interrupted by a high pitched feminine scream. I jumped to my feet, and Bill fluttered up to my shoulder. A chill ran down my spine. That scream was too familiar. Bill's worried look only confirmed my fears. With an unspoken confirmation, we both broke from our spot, and ran pell mell for the camp. With each labored breath, I prayed that what I feared to be true was not. Gone from my mind was the conversation of only a few seconds ago, and my worried thoughts of if any of what was going on was real. There was only one thing important now, I was sure that the scream belonged to my love. A love, if Bill was right, that was created from my fantasies and a children's book. But I did not care what the cause, I only wanted to administer the cure.

We arrived at the camp to find a scene of confusion, straight from downtown New York at rush hour. Everyone was running around shouting and screaming, and if I had not been so worried I would have marveled at the sights I was seeing. But none of them meant a thing to my eyes, I could not find Poly. I was right. She was gone!

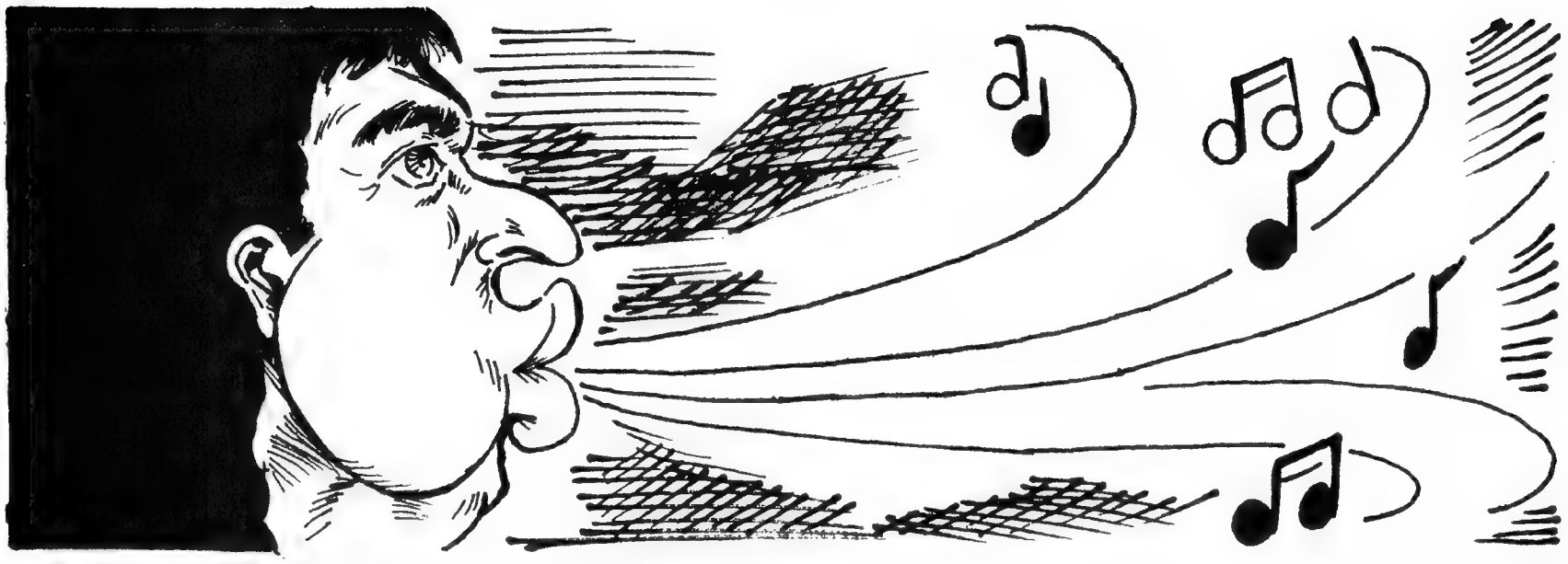
A giant bug dressed in clothes was running from wagon to wagon taking down notes in a little black book. The wooden sawhorse was rearing back and neighing to the heavens. A copper man that was no bigger than a twelve year old child, and whose body was round stood in the middle of the camp and yelled for someone to wind him up. A fat man dressed in red and white was playing music with his body.

Tiddle-widdle-iddle, oom pom-pom!
Oom, pom-pom! oom, pom-pom!
Tiddle-tiddle-tiddle, oom pom-pom!
Oom, pom-pom—pah!
his body sang.

A fox sat in the dirt and cried. Two winged monkeys were fighting beneath a wagon. Jack Pumpkinhead kept yelling for his father, and his father the princess looked bewildered. The lion and the tiger were making menacing sounds, but they had no one to make them to. I heard a trio of voices coming towards the Pumpkinhead's wagon, but could see no bodies.

I could see no sight of Polychrome.

Oscar came hurrying into this melee with the Shaggy man following behind. They both yelled for silence, but neither received it. Oscar gave up straining his voice, and went over and whispered a few words to the music man.



The chubby face atop that body of musical notes shook his head that he understood what the circus owner wanted. Oscar took a step away, and waited. The music man took a deep breath, and after screwing up his lips, he let fly a trumpet blast. Reveille and the opening chords to Magical Mystery Tour rolled into one long blast. "Roll up, roll up for a magical mystery tour. Wake up you grunts!" It had the desired effect. Everyone got very quiet. The monkeys stopped fighting, the lion and tiger sat down and looked peaceful, the fox only whimpered.

"Now," Oscar took center stage. Everyone's attention was on him. Bill had left my side, and was standing alongside Eureka. The two were talking in a low whisper. "perhaps we can get down the the problem. I am sure that if we put our minds to it we will come up with a solution."

My temper was no better than it had been when Poly had ran out on me. If anything, it was worse. "What the hell happened. Bill and I heard a scream. Where is Poly?"

Everyone turned away from me, no one wanted to have to answer my last question. Soon all eyes were turned toward Oscar, waiting for the leader to lead. To answer my question. For one of the few times in his long winded life, Oscar so and so and so Diggs was at a loss of words.

"This grieves me to say, but the simple answer to your question is that the daughter of the rainbow has been kidnapped."

What?! It was true, my worst fears were true. "By who? There's no one here but you people." My question provided the answer, but I could not believe it.

Oscar lowered his head, and this time he could not speak. Leviticus came forward to explain. "It was part of our circus that did it. Among our members are some who you would classify as ex-cons. Oscar had decided to give them a chance to prove that they had reformed. Obviously they had not."

I couldn't believe it. Oscar had let known criminals live next to my beloved Poly. "You stupid..." I let it trail off as I realized that it was the worry and hurt and pain and anger talking. "...I'm sorry."

No one wanted to be the first to break the silence. I decided that since it was my fault no one wanted to talk I would have to be the one to break the silence. "Who was it?"

Oscar's head raised. "The dastardly deed was masterminded by the Prince of the Mangaboos, a race of plantmen. To his mind flesh and blood beings are an inferior breed. But he was not alone, ah no, he had help in this vile undertaking. The wooden gargoyles Zib and Zib and Wert and Urt, the baby dragons Jerry and Tom, and the wheelers Miney, Meeney, and Fred. All this was easy to discover thanks to the detective work of the Highly Magnified Woggle Bug, T. E. And the fact that there is only one person evil enough to be the leader of such a foul deed, and that is the Prince of the Mangaboos."

"Where are they?" I was afraid that Oscar was about to launch into the past history of the evil Prince.

Oscar held up an imposing finger. "Ah, where are they you ask? After a thorough search of the camp we are able to say that they are positively not anywhere within this camp. So where are they we ask ourselves again. There is only one possible answer. They are in the cabin of our friend Philip." With a dramatic gesture, he pointed towards the cabin, and if to confirm his theory another scream sounded from within the cabin. Oscar was more surprised than the rest of us.

Within the next few minutes I was able to get the rest of the story in a more straight forward manner. After our talk, Poly had fled back to the camp in tears, and had run into King Dox, the fox. Dox had tried to comfort her, and suggested a walk to calm her nerves. The two set out in the opposite direction of her first walk. Unknown to either of them, the Prince of the Mangaboos had seen them leave the camp, and an evil plan began to form in his mind. He gathered together his band of evil doers, and they went out and grabbed Poly. They left Dox in the woods unconscious. The first scream that Bill and I had heard had been when they tried to force her into the cabin. The second was for only God knows what.

Everyone was ready for action. We wanted to charge the cabin and free Poly. But we knew that such a plan would prove disasterous for Poly. We had to have a plan, yet none of us did. Or none except for one. Oscar rose his hands to heaven and vowed that we would free Poly. "And I think I have a plan to accomplish this wondrous feat."

We listened to Oscar's plan, and made ready to put it into action. I did not think it much better than a straight charge, but I kept my mouth shut. I had no better idea.

My part in the plan was not much, but again it was better than nothing. While Oscar was explaining part of his plan to King Dox and the winged monkeys, I pulled Bill aside for a question.

"If you're not real, then you really can't die, can you?"

Bill was in no mood to put up with me. His answer was curt. "I never said that we were not real. Keep believing that and you will find out if we can die or not. To your regret." Bill moved back into the crowd of circus people, and I decided to do the smartest thing of my life, shut up.

I stood off to the side by myself until Oscar called for everyone to get ready. The plan to free Polychrome, the daughter of the rainbow was ready to put into action.

Phase One: The winged monkeys took to the air with Eureka and Bill. They flew in the opposite direction from the cabin until they had gained a fairly high altitude. Then they reversed their flight, and headed back towards the cabin. They kept to their high altitude until they were directly over the cabin. When they were in such a position they began their descent. They spiraled downwards until they were hovering only a foot above the roof of the cabin.

Phase Two: The Music Man, who I had been introduced to as Allegro da Capo the Musicker, began to wail away when he saw the two monkeys in place above the cabin. He made as loud a racket as he could; drums, bugles, cymbals, and many other musical instruments seemed to sound from his body. The noise he made was deafening. At this time the first charge was made upon the cabin. The Woggle Bug lead, and we followed. We being King Dox, Jim the horse, Tik Tok, the saw horse and myself. Plus the invisible family. Yes, I had been right before, there was an invisible family in the circus. Father, mother, and son. We were hoping that the Prince and his cohorts did not think of them. While all this excitment was going on Eureka and Bill dropped from the winged monkeys to the cabin's roof. They scampered to the chimney, and dove down. By now there was activity in the cabin. The door was flung open, and some of the bad guys rushed out. Leaving only the Prince and the two dragons inside.

Phase Three: The second charge erupted from the woods on the other side of the cabin. This charge was lead by Oscar and consisted of the Lion, the Tiger, Lev, and Jack Pumpkinhead. The invisible people moved next to the right front window of the cabin. Inside the cabin if all was going according to plan, Bill and Eureka were supposed to be making as big a rukus as they could. While we on the outside were commissioned to keep the villains on the outside from going back inside. The kidnappers on the porch split up, the gargoyles heading for Oscar and his group while the wheelers attacked us. I could hear shouts coming from the inside of the cabin, and I saw the window by the invisible family open. And then I saw a wheeler coming towards me, and I forgot all else. When the wheeler was within striking distance I reeled back and did just that. I struck, with every ounce of strength that I could muster. The wheeler's wheels left the ground, a wheeler had wheels where his feet are supposed to be, and he hit the ground with a thud. He did not get back up. I nursed my knuckles, and said to the fallen wheeler. "That one was for Poly."

I looked towards the cabin, and saw Poly. It looked as if she was floating above the ground, but I knew that was the invisible people handing her out the window. I wanted to cheer, but I could not draw no attention to the rescue. Besides we had not won the fight yet. But when I looked around I saw that we were on the verge of winning. Until the two baby dragons came out and joined the fight. That had been our big worry.

I saw Poly being carried off to the woods, and Bill and Eureka leaped from the window of the cabin after she was safe. A dragon's head poked through the window, its jaws snapping shut just short of Eureka's tail. Then Poly's father arrived.

A rainbow appeared out of the sky, and anchored itself to the ground where the cabin used to be. The rainbow was beautiful, a sight too awesome to behold. The fighting ceased without a word. Everyone was too busy watching the rainbow to fight. I could not see the cabin beneath the rainbow.

"Come daughter, it is time to come back home. You may come back at another time." The voice was omniscent. The tone was that of love. Poly appeared from the woods. Her beauty paled next to this creation of her fathers'. She marched to the rainbow, and without a word, climbed aboard. Within an instant both Polychrome and rainbow were gone. It was only then that I found my voice. "No! Poly don't go. Come back." But I was not sure if I meant it for Poly or the rainbow.

I did not realize that I was crying until I tasted salt on my lips. I wiped at my eyes. The cabin was visible again. It was cushed, and I could see the unconscious bodies of the Prince and the two baby dragons.

I looked heavenward. "Goodbye Poly."

"My hurt over Poly did not go away, rather it was turned into a memory to be cherished for what it was."

Oscar appeared beside me, placing a gentle hand upon my shoulder. "We perform within the hour." The villains were all being rounded up, and put into caged wagons and locked.

I sat by the lakeside with Bill and Eureka next to me until Oscar came to fetch me for the performance. The hour by the lakeside the three of us had said nothing.

During the next few hours again I became a child, and saw wonders that no circus ever produced. My hurt over Poly did not go away, rather it was turned into a memory to be cherished for what it was. Perhaps not much, but enough.

While watching the winged monkeys perform aerial acrobatics, I had a sudden thought. I turned to speak to Bill. "Bill, I just realized what has been wrong with my life. I've been sitting back and waiting for things to come to me. I've expected happiness to fall in my lap. But it doesn't work that way.

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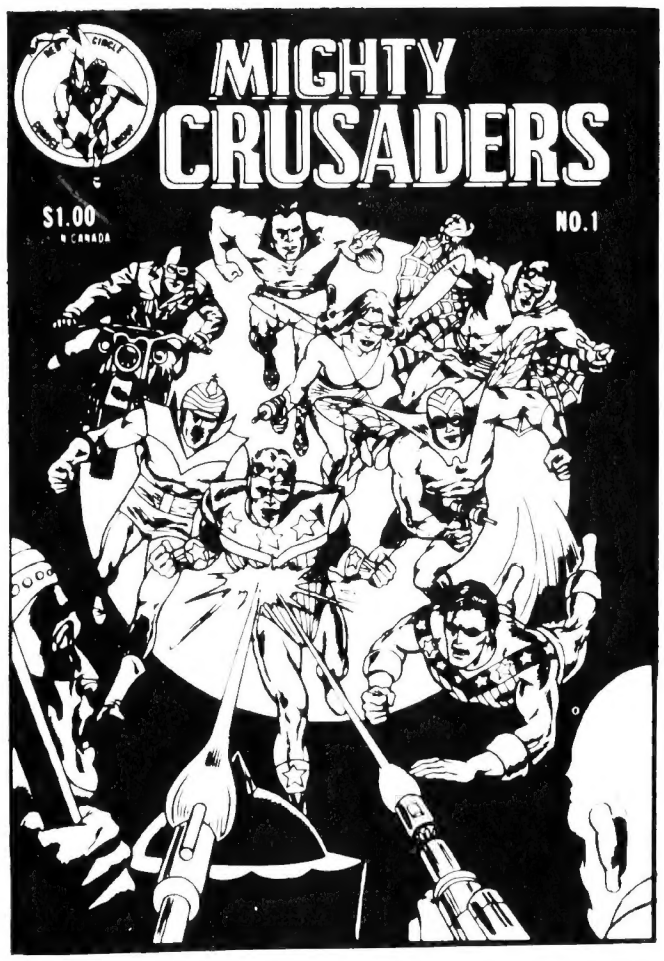

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